



Exploring the role of inspirational motivation to institutions of higher learning: Empirical evidence from selected universities in Kenya

Janet Kavengi Muthimi ^(a) James M. Kilika ^(b) Godfrey Kinyua ^(c)

^(a) Department of Business Administration, School of Business, Kenyatta University, Kenya

^(b,c) Dr(s), Department of Business Administration, School of Business, Kenyatta University, Kenya



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ABSTRACT

Organizations are experiencing increased challenges due to changed environmental circumstances that threaten their survival including institutions of higher learning. There is therefore a growing concern for universities to be strategically aligned so as to meet the growing challenges of the societies in which they operate by creating ecosystems that drive industrialization through the generation of new knowledge, technology transfer and support of new start-ups. Additionally, concerns have been raised as regards the quality and relevance of services offered by the universities in Kenya. Owing to these limitations, there is a need for the higher education sector to consider inspirational motivation practices between the leaders and their followers so as to enhance performance. This study, therefore, sought to establish the effect of inspirational motivation on the academic performance of selected universities in Kenya. The study was anchored on transformational leadership theory. Positivism research philosophy was adopted where explanatory and descriptive research designs were used for guiding the collection and analysis of data. Primary data was collected from deans of schools and chairmen of departments in the selected universities. The study established a significant positive effect of inspirational motivation on academic performance of universities at $p < 0.05$; $t = 8.057$ and hence concluded that inspirational motivation positively affects university academic performance of selected universities in Kenya.

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Introduction

Organizations are experiencing increased challenges due to changed environmental circumstances that threaten their survival. The concern for the organizations under the circumstances is not only short-term survival but also sustaining superior performance in the long-term. In this connection, there is need for organizations to continually seek ways of enhancing and sustaining their performance given the highly competitive nature of operating environments (Arslan & Staub, 2013) by nurturing the support needed for sustained performance outputs given the highly dynamic business environment (Al-Mawali, 2013). Scholars in leadership have pointed at the need to align the performance expectations of organizations with the interests of their members as a viable means of ensuring sustained performance (Bass, 1999). This in itself underscores the role of leadership in organizations during periods of environmental turbulence.

Quality leadership in an organization has always been regarded as one of the most critical determinants of success that may influence the performance of an organisation (Ali, Elmi & Mohammed, 2013). Kroll (2016) on the other hand is of the view that despite the importance of organizational performance, organizations must understand all factors that are necessary for achievement of the desired outcomes. Additionally, it has been argued that the type of leadership in an organization determines an organization's potential to enhance its desired performance (Overall, 2015; Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). Transformational leadership style has been proposed as a suitable model for application in organizations in aligning organizational members with the goals of organizations especially in situations that involve institutional change (Pairar, 2003).

* Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9271-1066

Transformational leaders foster collaboration and dedication by expounding the organization's motives and foster willpower amongst staff (Renjith, Renu & George, 2015). Barth-Farkas and Vera (2014) argue that such leaders perform role modelling to their followers who in turn imitate their actions. Hughes (2014) in reference to the work of Bernard Bass indicated that transformational leaders exhibit behaviours that are clustered into four different styles that scholars have referred to as the 4Is of Transformational leadership, namely idealized influence, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation (Tharnpas & Boon-itt, 2015; Devi & Narayanamma, 2016). Transformational leaders engage into corresponding behaviours derived from each of the four styles to generate follower behaviours that are suitable to transform work systems thus leading to achievement of organizational goals based on attained intrinsic staff drive that becomes a basis for sustaining quest and momentum for change (Caillier, 2014).

Scholarly attention has been given to each of the four styles of leadership based on the 4Is of transformational leadership. Some scholars have pointed out that even though each of the 4Is components plays a role in driving performance in organizations, they vary in the manner that they contribute towards explaining the effect of transformational leadership on organizational outcomes. For example, Verma (2014) presented inspirational motivation to be a more effective form of motivation than any other motivational technique. Nyokabi, K'Aol and Njagi (2017) argued that the dimension of inspirational motivation leads to better organizational outcomes due to the manner in which it connects with higher levels of employee engagement and effectiveness.

Those scholars focusing on the dimension of inspirational motivation have used diverse attributes of its nature to indicate the manner in which it accounts for its contribution to organizational outcomes through the effect it accomplishes on followers by helping them connect with the vision of the organization by creating a sense of optimism (Hughes, 2014). Thus, inspirational motivation as a type of transformational leadership style is about future optimism, articulating the vision and upholding team spirit which gives followers the needed assurance to execute their duties (McCleskey, 2014). Transformational leaders therefore nurture collaboration and dedication by encouraging employees to uphold the organization's goals (Renjith, Renu & George, 2015) and through this it helps the workforce to connect with the organization's vision through communication in a way that builds the needed confidence and enthusiasm among followers to work towards the chosen organizational dream (Popa, 2012).

This study therefore undertook to investigate the role of inspirational motivation as a component of transformational leadership based on its unique characteristics that have been used to explain the contribution of transformational leadership to organizational outcomes. The authors applied the construct in the higher education sector in the Kenyan context. The higher education sector provides a suitable ground for investigation of the role transformational leadership plays because of its impact to society due to the role played by Universities. Universities are positioned as innovation actors based on creation and dissemination of knowledge that is a strong basis for industrialization and entrepreneurship. At the heart of the process are researchers working in different capacities and faculties as knowledge workers. Hughes (2014) presented transformational leadership as a suitable model for explaining how leadership can explain relevant behaviours and their impacts on the high-impact and innovative social organizations.

There is a growing concern for universities to be strategically aligned so as to meet the growing challenges of the societies in which they operate by creating ecosystems that drive industrialization through generation of new knowledge, technology transfer and support of new start-ups. In the context where the study was done, the setting has identified the expected role of universities in Kenya in realizing a national dream for industrialization to raise the status of the country into a middle income economy by the year 2030 (Kenya Vision, 2030). For the institutions of higher learning that have assimilated this national vision, it is important to shed light on how transformational leadership has been applied at different levels of hierarchy to position the universities for the achievement of the national vision amidst growing concerns for quality and relevance of the services obtained from the universities (OECD, 2016; UNESCO, 2017). Besides, extant empirical work on the various dimensions of transformational leadership indicates that inspirational motivation has not been studied independently to show how its attributes have been applied to explain organizational outcomes (Langat, Linge & Sikalieh, 2019; Nyokabi et al., 2017; Hughes, 2014).

Few studies also have focused on the role of transformational leadership in the higher education sector, thus raising an important gap on how the dimensions of transformational leadership apply in the higher education sector and the role it will make towards helping universities achieve their missions in the society and so the third mission. Though some evidence exists to show that transformational leadership is relevant to the education sector, the attention has been given to studying it at school level (Balyer, 2012; Liu & Li, 2018) at the level of specific educational extension services (Greiman, 2009). Despite the call for educators at the higher education level to embrace transformational leadership as a way of performing their role as change agents (Sun, Chen & Zhang, 2017), there has been limited research towards demonstrating how specific dimensions of transformational leadership are suited for application at the different levels of hierarchy in universities. Considerable effort has been given towards application of transformational leadership in a number of other fields such as nursing, hospitality and agriculture (Hutchison & Jackson, 2013; Gui, Luo, Zhang & Deng, 2020; Greiman, 2009).

The authors, persuaded by the state of the extant research on transformational leadership and its impact on work organizations undertook to study the role of the specific dimension of transformational leadership of inspirational motivation. Doing so permitted the researchers to consider the specific attributes of inspirational motivation with a view to linking the attributes to the specific performance indicators of a university. The authors considered that studying these specific attributes would provide a better lens by which scholarship in strategic management would link the specific attributes of inspirational motivation to certain strategic management imperatives that studies in both leadership and strategic management would find suitable to provide a point of

convergence between strategic management and leadership through the role of organizational members. Thus, the research selected three attributes of inspirational motivation namely, optimism, vision and team spirit as these are at the core of what constitutes strategic thinking when organizations are setting their direction towards the future and rallying organizational members across different levels of hierarchy towards a common purpose (Pearce & Robinson, 2012). The study therefore sought to answer three questions: what is the relationship between the specific dimensions of inspirational motivation of (i) optimism (ii) vision and (iii) team spirit on the performance of universities in Kenya.

Literature Review

The outstanding aspects of transformational model of leadership are vision and follower facilitation to contribute to the achievement of the vision of an organization. The transformational leader realizing this connection seeks to develop the capacity of followers to connect with the vision through tactics that raise the followers' level of intrinsic motivation. The transformational leadership theory anchors deeply in its postulates the role of the generated capacity of the followers through their perceived ability and motivation which feeds into their self efficacy or confidence (Hughes, 2014). This role of motivation is critical in that the expected performance outcome of the system in which followers are engaged depends on the realized level of follower self-efficacy and self-confidence. The role of the leader in applying the inspirational motivation component is to build confidence among followers, connect them with the organizational vision and create work teams that work towards realization of the vision. Inspirational motivation thus entails articulating a compelling vision, creating an image of what is essential to consider, encouraging a sense of team spirit and creating enthusiasm.

Several scholars have attempted to operationalize the dimension of inspirational motivation in different research works. Langat *et al.*, (2019) operationalized it in terms of creating vision, developing a plan for realizing the vision, mobilizing commitment towards the vision through communication; Nyokabi *et al.*, (2017) considered it in terms of communicating the vision, motivating and encouraging team spirit while Hughes (2014) operationalized it in terms of talking optimistically about the future, articulating a compelling vision for the future, talking about what needs to be accomplished, expressing confidence that goals will be achieved, creating exciting image of what is essential to consider and encouraging team spirit.

This study adopted three indicators of the construct of inspirational motivation, namely optimism, vision and team spirit. The three were considered holistic and comprehensive to address the implied aspects of mobilizing towards a vision, creating enthusiasm, creating the exciting image and expressing confidence that goals will be achieved. Of these three, empirical work appears deficient in explaining how they apply as well as contribute to organizational outcomes. Langat *et al.*, (2019) used communication, team work and motivation in general and did not integrate the aspect of vision. Nyokabi *et al.*, (2017) though focusing on inspirational motivation generalized the conceptualization and operationalization of the construct so as to measure its impact as a composite and failed to account for how the specific ingredients of inspirational motivation contribute to organizational outcomes.

It is also noted that the various studies using inspirational motivation as a predictor of organizational outcomes have used different indicators of the organizational outcome construct. Elmasry and Bakri (2019) in their study related transformational leadership to good governance in the public sector, which conceptually may be regarded to have focused on the intermediate rather than the ultimate outcome of organizational expectations. Similarly, Malik, Javed and Hassan (2017) carried out a study to establish how the elements of transformational leadership affected job contentment and organizational obligation. A two-stage cluster sampling design was used to select a sample of 5 Islamic banks of Pakistan from 56 branches in Gujranwala division. Chebon, Aruasa and Chirchir (2019) used two components of the transformational leadership, inspirational motivation and idealized influence in relation to employee performance in a healthcare facility.

University Academic Performance

The construct of performance is widely used as a dependent variable in most studies in strategic management. There have been diverse views by researchers regarding the definition of organization performance. For instance, Scheschener (2017) views performance of organization as the effectiveness in fulfilling its purpose while Luo, Gnyawali and Bu (2016) argue that performance is used to describe evidence of previous decisions and behaviours, current strategic behaviours engaged in decisions and behaviours that intentionally target the advancement of capabilities of the organization in the future. Organizations must therefore suggest the appropriate means of achieving targeted performance levels as well as performance assessment measures developed in line with the organization's framework, strategies and objectives (Parmenter, 2015).

Performance indicators have been suggested to be playing a crucial task in determining an organization's level of performance in either financial or non-financial dimensions (Lonial & Carter, 2015). Cho and Dansereau (2010), define organizational performance as ways in which a company effectively achieves its targets. In addition, other researchers term it as the tangible outcomes of an organization versus the projected outputs (Tomal & Jones, 2015). Mastrangelo, Eddy and Lorenzet (2014) are of the view that an organization's performance also depends on its employees who work towards achieving the set goals. Ondoro (2015) argues that continuous performance is key to any organization as it can be used to determine an organization's growth and progress.

From a strategic management point of view, the balanced scorecard model has been developed to determine performance of organizations over the last two decades (Kaplan & Norton 1992; Kaplan & Norton 2008). Many organizations have adopted the

BSC since its inception (Kaplan & Norton 2004). Additionally, BSC has generated enormous interest in academic and industrial communities (Kraus & Lind, 2010; Barnabe & Busco, 2012; Norreklit, Norreklit, Mitchell, & Bjomenak, 2012; Salterio, 2012). Researchers such as Pietrzak, Paliszkievicz and Klepacki (2015) argue that given the increased competition in various sectors, there is a growing interest in quality improvement, crafting and putting into practice some of the organizational performance measurement systems and hence the introduction of the BSC in most organizations to help measure performance.

Extant research has conceptualized the construct of academic performance of universities differently. Rossi and Rosli (2015) considered indicators of university performance through the lens of university-industry knowledge transfer. Shale and Gomes (2015) generated a list of indicators based on university distance education, while Massimiliano, Abigail, Robin and Jeremy (2004) took a macro view of organizations to propose indicators for an entire university system while Gao (2014) used an internationalization lens. From these works several indicators were suggested as research, community service and economic impact, employee satisfaction, employment indicators, student satisfaction, financial indicators, employability research retention and program, access and participation and internationalization.

In the context where this study was done, previous attempts in research on areas relating to a diversity of indicators to the dependent variables of university performance used a multiplicity of indicators that included community service, research output, web-ranking, student enrolment, completion rates of students and number of graduates, number of publications, knowledge transferred and community outreach (Kilika, 2012; Kilika, K’Obonyo, Ogutu & Munyoki, 2016; Mutahi & Busienei, 2015; Wambua, Ofafa, Otor & Ngonzo, 2014). This study borrowed from these previous researches and operationalized the academic performance of universities in terms of quality of teaching depicted through relevance of teaching, curriculum review and academic audits; research uptake through measures such as innovations, publications, dissemination and community outreach in terms of university-industry collaborations, corporate social responsibility and civic engagement.

Conceptualization and Hypotheses

Based on the preceding theoretical and empirical literature review, the conceptual framework in Figure 2.1 shows the interaction between the research variables.

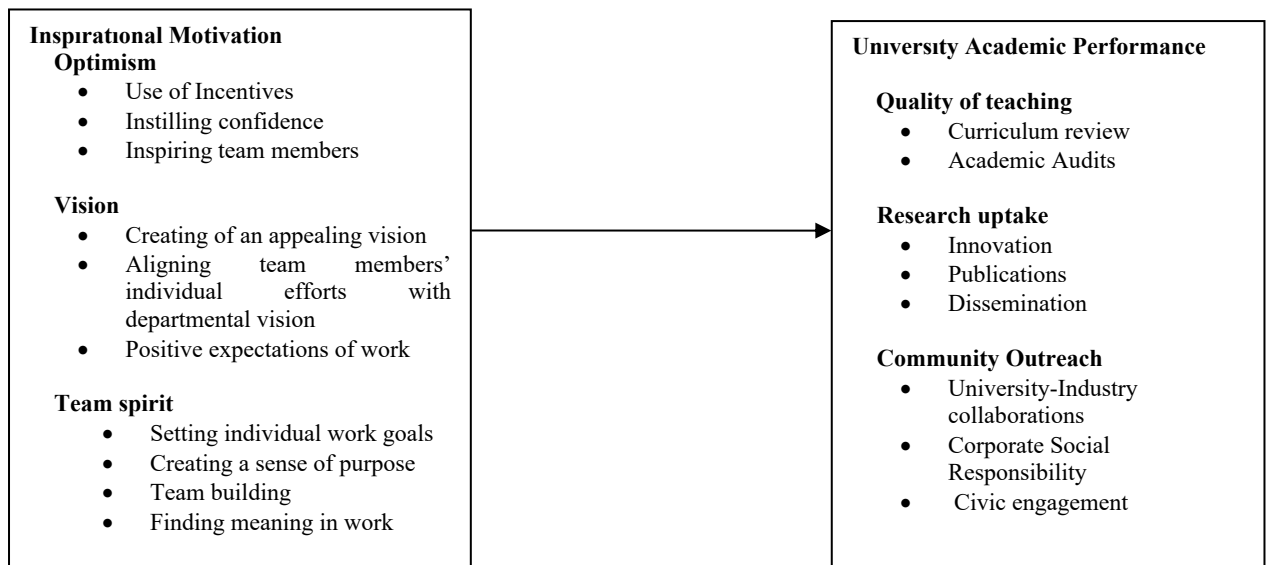


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Arising from reviewed literature and resulting conceptual framework it is hypothesised that:

H1: Optimism has a significant effect on academic performance of selected Universities in Kenya.

H2: Vision has a significant effect on academic performance of selected Universities in Kenya.

H3: Team spirit has a significant effect on academic performance of selected Universities in Kenya.

Research Methodology

Research Philosophy and Design

This study adopted a positivism philosophy in line with the focus upon which the study was built that was characterized by testing hypotheses drawn from existing theories through the measurement of observable social realities using data originally collected (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). Under positivism, the environment and the events of interest are objective, external and independent of the researcher. An explanatory and descriptive research design was adopted in this study. An explanatory research design leads to establishment of underlying relationships between variables (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). This study sought to establish how components of inspirational motivation relate with academic performance of universities in Kenya.

Population and sampling

The population of the study comprised all the 74 licensed Universities operating in Kenya which included: 31 Public funded chartered universities, 6 Public funded Constituent Colleges of public universities, 18 chartered Private universities, 5 Private Constituent Colleges and 14 universities operating with a Letter of Interim Authority from the Commission for University Education. A multi-stage sampling technique was applied in this study to select a representative sample of universities and respondents based on the university as the unit of analysis and functional units across the management hierarchy as the units of observation. This sampling approach involves the combination of several probability sampling techniques at several steps (Zikmund, 2003). Kilika (2012) used a similar approach in a study on the relationship between human resource development infrastructure and performance of universities in Kenya mediated by university-industry collaboration.

The multi-stage sampling technique was applied in this study at three stages. Stage one involved the selection of the respective Universities from which respondents were drawn based on a purposive sampling method criterion that sought to obtain the list of universities that had been in operation at least five years before the date of the study. The data was collected between March and July 2020, and the criteria yielded a list of 39 universities. The second stage involved identification of the relevant units for observation within selected universities. The decision on how to identify the units was based on the units within university administrative structure responsible for driving academic performance so as to obtain the data suitable to the indicators of performance adopted by the study. Thus, the study identified more than 1000 qualifying units for investigation from the faculties/schools and departments under study, the exact figure was not ascertainable since some universities did not disclose some of the pertinent information regarding their faculties and schools and the researchers adopted an approach for determining sample size from an unknown population.

The third stage involved determination of the sample size for both the universities and the units of observation. Cochran's formula was used to determine the total sample size of 370 respondents comprising deans/directors and heads of departments based on the formula shown below for computing sample size from an unknown finite population (Cochran, 1977). Proportionate stratified random sampling method was applied to select the respondents from the faculties and departments giving a sample of 39 universities and 370 units of observation in schools and departments so as to ensure randomization and representativeness (Zikmund, 2003).

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

where:

n_0 is the sample size,

Z is the selected critical value of desired confidence level (in this study 95% confidence level corresponding to 1.96)

p is the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population,

$q = p - 1$

e^2 is the desired level of precision

$$n_0 = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 1-0.5}{0.05^2}$$

$$n_0 \approx 370$$

Research Data

A structured questionnaire was used for collection of primary data. The questionnaire comprised of three sections. Section A sought to obtain general information about the respondents and consisted of thirteen questions. Section B consisted of a total of twelve items seeking to obtain regarding on the three components of inspirational motivation adopted as operational indicators of the construct. Section C comprised of twelve items seeking to obtain information on university academic performance. The construct validity of the research instrument was ascertained through the use of indicators drawn from the reviewed literature and experts opinions used

to validate them. Reliability of the instrument was tested by the value of Cronbach's Alpha (α) which is required to achieve a level of greater than 0.7 for the indicators of the variables (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Hair, Black, Balin & Anderson, 2012). The reliability test results in Table 1 indicate that all the variables and their indicators satisfied the identified threshold.

The questionnaire was administered through a drop and pick method, whereby the randomly selected respondents were informed about their selection to participate in the survey through their official emails by the researchers then questionnaires dropped into their offices by the researchers with the help of a research assistant where each was taken through the respective sections of the instrument then given ample time to respond in reference to the necessary supporting official documents then later collected at an agreed date. Overall, the survey realised a response rate of 68.5% which according to (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006), was considered satisfactory to proceed on with analysis.

The data was summarised through frequencies for sections of the questionnaire touching on respondents' demographic characteristics, descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation for variable characteristics, several diagnostic tests to ensure basic assumptions regarding the data were not violated and multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses. The diagnostic test results for multicollinearity tests, test of normality, homoscedasticity and test of linearity indicated that the relevant parameters for ascertaining the compliance to the corresponding assumptions of multiple regression analysis were complied with and that the data satisfied the requirement for the test of hypotheses (Field, 2013; Razali & Wah, 2011; Gastwirth, Gel & Miao, 2009).

Table 1: Reliability Coefficients

Variable	No of Items	Reliability Score	Remarks
Optimism	3	.877	Reliable
Vision	3	.922	Reliable
Team spirit	4	.891	Reliable
Overall	10	.897	Reliable

Findings

Respondents' Characteristics

The findings reported are drawn from the part of the questionnaire which sought to obtain the respondent's demographic information. The demographic characteristics findings were reported through frequency tables. The study obtained data relating to respondents' gender, number of years worked in the university, position held in the university, number of years one has served in the current position, previous administrative appointments and any other administrative responsibilities held. Additionally, respondents were required to indicate the number of faculty members reporting to the respondent, highest academic qualification, area of specialization for Bachelors, Masters and PhD degree, number of workshops/seminars attended and their ranking of the university in terms of academic performance. Table 2 presents the summary of the respondents' characteristics.

Table 2: Respondents' Characteristics

Biographic Dimension	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	170	68.0
	Female	80	32.0
Years of service	3years and below	68	27.2
	4-7 years	58	23.2
	8-11 years	71	28.4
	12 years and above	53	21.2
Highest Academic Qualification	Masters	54	21.6
	PhD	181	72.4
	Postdoctoral	15	6.0
Position held in the University	Dean	99	39.6
	Chairman	151	60.4
Years in current Position	Less than 2 years	96	38.4
	Between 2-5 years	103	41.2
	More than 5 years	51	20.4
Previous administrative positions	Examination coordinator	129	51.6
	Director	48	19.2

Chairman	38	15.2
None of the above	35	14.0

Descriptive Results

The summary characteristics of the variables and the measured operational indicators are presented in table 3. Both the independent and dependent variables were measured in a 5-point likert scale in terms of the extent of practice and level of achievement respectively.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Inspirational Motivation and University Academic Performance

Variable	Questionnaire items	N	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Optimism	Use of Incentives	250	3.24	1.09
	Instilling confidence	250	3.70	1.11
	Inspiring team members	250	3.14	1.19
Vision	Creating of an appealing vision	250	3.59	1.23
	Aligning staff efforts with University vision	250	3.36	1.25
	Positive expectations of work	250	3.64	1.01
	Emphasis on Setting Individual member goals	250	3.79	1.18
Team Spirit	Creating a sense of purpose	250	3.52	1.14
	Team building sessions for staff members	250	3.03	1.27
	Helping to find meaning in work	250	3.21	1.29
Aggregate Scores			3.40	1.19
Quality of teaching	New academic programmes	250	3.16	1.05
	Curriculum reviews	250	3.62	1.20
	self-sponsored programs	250	3.50	1.23
Research uptake	Conference papers	250	3.51	1.27
	Peer reviewed journal articles	250	3.40	1.10
	research grant proposals	250	3.41	1.21
	consultancy projects	250	3.48	1.18
	books and book chapters	250	3.73	1.11
Community Outreach	Active MOUs with Industry	250	3.48	1.18
	Collaborations initiated	250	3.63	1.21
Aggregate Scores			3.46	1.18

Test of hypotheses

The multiple regression analysis results are summarized in Table 4. The results indicate that the regression model relating components of inspirational motivation with indicators of university academic performance was significant ($F=27.668$; $P<0.00$) and that the model accounts for 24.3% variation in academic performance of universities in the sample.

Table 4: Results of Test of Hypotheses

Parameter	Regression Results	Observation
F	27.668*	Model fit and good
Adj R²	.252	Model explains relatively low variation in academic performance
β Constant	2.228*	
β Optimism	.139**	H ₁ Supported
β Vision	.355*	H ₂ Supported
β Team Spirit	.211*	H ₃ Supported
VIF	VIF values < 10	No multicollinearity
Shapiro Wilk Test	p-value > 0.05	Data normally distributed hence model fit for quantitative data analysis
Levene Test of homogeneity	p-value greater than 0.05	No presence of heteroscedasticity
Pearson's Correlation	r > 0	Linearity assumption not violated

The results provide evidence that the tested hypotheses were supported by the data on the studied sample thus leading to the conclusion that there is a significant positive statistical relationship between the components of inspirational motivation of optimism, vision and team spirit with the indicators of university academic performance. Thus, inspirational motivation aspect of transformational leadership has a significant contribution to the academic performance of universities in Kenya.

Discussions and Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings presented from the analyzed data leading to the conclusions on the hypotheses tested in the study have implications on the underlying conceptual, theoretical and empirical work as well as the context of practice. The authors discuss these implications in view of the various dimensions of the data, extant theoretical and empirical work. The focus of the study was to explain how inspirational motivation dimension of transformational leadership contributes to academic performance of universities. The adoption of this dimension was based on several considerations: the nature of the universities as innovation actors, their potential effect on the society and the expected contribution of transformational leadership in enhancing this expected level of innovation. The selected respondents were identified on the basis of the vantage position of deans and heads of departments in driving the academic performance of the universities. The findings reported indicated that to a great extent, the respondents had been prepared for the current position of leadership through prior appointments in administrative positions of the universities as examination coordinators, directors of units or campuses and heads of departments. The previous exposure enabled the respondents to understand the environment in which their leadership was being applied in terms of the work and the nature of their followers' majority of whom are faculty and a few support and administrative staff. This is important since leadership success borders on how the leader is able to fit into the context, respond to the diversity of contingencies and marshal the support of the followers so as to align their personal goals with those of the organization (Hughes & Morgan, 2007).

The study chose three indicators of inspirational motivation, namely optimism, vision and team working and the descriptive results confirmed that the respondents practiced various aspects of these components of inspirational motivation to a moderate extent as indicated by the mean that ranged between 3.03 and 3.79 and a corresponding standard deviation that was relatively low to imply that there was little variation in the manner the respondents practiced transformational leadership dimension of inspirational motivation. The dependent variable on the other hand was operationalised through quality teaching, research uptake, and community outreach. The indicators were adopted from previous research work to ensure close identity with the nature of the context and the societal expectation on the role of universities especially their focus on the third mission that responds to this societal expectation. The universities were reported to record the academic performance in line with this societal expectation within a range of moderate to high extent ($M=3.16-M=3.78$; $S.D=1.01-S.D=1.29$). The main question then remains how much of this achieved level of academic performance derives from the level of transformational leadership practice connected with inspirational motivation.

The findings from the test of the three hypotheses help to answer this concern with an indication that, of the achieved level of academic performance, inspirational motivation has statistically contributed to a variation of 25%. Even though this may be considered relatively low, we observe that leadership is a qualitative dimension whose effect on systems of work may not correspond so directly. We observe that even though several attributes of inspirational motivation were measured in the study, majority of these were found to operate at moderate level with a few scoring at the level tending towards a high level of practice. Those areas of focus practised at high level cut across the three operational indicators adopted for inspirational motivation as: optimism (instilling confidence, $M=3.70$; $S.D=1.11$); vision (creating of an appealing vision, $M=3.59$, $S.D=1.23$; setting individual member goals, $M=3.79$, $S.D=1.18$) and team spirit (creating a sense of purpose, $M=3.52$, $S.D=1.14$).

In terms of the supporting theoretical underpinning behind the adoption of the indicators, it is observed that in terms of conceptualization, the variable was anchored on the tenets of transformational leadership theory which provides a rational approach where a leader influences and inspires followers' principles and moral values in addition to motivating and rewarding followers (Northouse, 2013). The theoretical literature on inspirational motivation argues that this attribute of transformational leadership style is about future optimism, articulating the vision and upholding team spirit which gives followers the needed assurance to execute their duties and leads to a confident and positive communication of the organization's dream and enthusiasm needed to achieve the intended goals, (Popa, 2012; McCleskey, 2014).

The contribution of the extent of practice of inspirational motivation to the achieved level of academic performance is further explainable through Resource Based View (RBV) lens. The RBV postulates that when an organization makes use of its strategic assets, they are translated to capabilities which later become competencies and hence gives the organization a competitive edge. In view of this, we interpret that the various dimensions of inspirational motivation found to be emphasized by the sampled respondents and in consideration of the relevant preparatory administrative activities by the universities to the deans and heads of departments constitute an investment on the respondents to build their leadership capabilities so as to raise their capacity to operate as strategic resources.

In terms of how the current findings compare with previous research, a number of previous studies have been done on the construct of inspirational motivation (Osabiya, 2015; Malik, Javed & Hassan, 2017; Chebon, Aruasa & Chirchir, 2019; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019). These studies were carried out in sectors like the public sector, health sector, banking sector and the private sector. The studies sought to investigate the impact of inspirational motivation as an aspect of transformational leadership on good governance, employee performance, job contentment and organizational obligation and organizational performance. Even though these previous

studies were similar to the current study in a variety of empirical findings, the current study however departs from the previous studies in several ways. First, the previous studies conceptualization of the independent variable of inspirational motivation was measured in a composite manner thus failing to capture an indication of how the specific dimensions of the variable would lead to the observed variation in the dependent variable. Secondly, the studies were not consistent on the focus on the dependent variable with the attention being given to measurement at a micro level of organizational analysis thus denying both scholarship and practice the opportunity to better link the contribution of inspirational motivation to the societal expected roles of highly innovative organizations to which universities belong and therefore the role of inspirational motivation among universities in accomplishing their third mission. Thirdly the studies were limited in their contextual scope in that they focused on other sectors and those that delved to study universities carried out investigations at micro level of analysis thus limiting the ability to generalize the contribution of transformational leadership.

The findings of the study therefore make several contributions towards the development of knowledge in leadership and strategic management studies. First, the study uses a comprehensive set of operational indicators to operationalize inspirational motivation to make it possible for measurement in empirical work as a distinct component of transformational leadership and through this respond to earlier identified gaps on the relative contribution of transformational leadership to organizational outcomes. Secondly, the study attempts to provide an understanding on how inspirational motivation contributes to organizational outcomes in a less studied sector of the economy, namely universities. Through the measures of academic performance adopted, the study confirms earlier assertions by (Daft, 2014; Northouse, 2013) about the applicability of the various dimensions of transformational leadership to the societal role of highly innovative organizations. The explanation offered linking the extent of practice of inspirational motivation and the level of academic performance achieved helps to explain how the two constructs are related in a highly innovative sector. Lastly, in terms of theoretical contribution, the study highlights a possibility of complementarity between the transformational leadership theory and those internally focused theories adopted in strategic management seeking to explain organizational outcomes. Through this, a close relationship is discernible from the postulates of transformational leadership and the Resource based view theories. This complementarity thus leads to an important observation that transformational leadership dimension of inspirational motivation is a strategic resource in organizations that can explain variation in its outcomes as well as sustain its desired superior sustained performance.

Conclusion

The findings reported in the study lead to three conclusions. First, inspirational motivation is relevant for practice in highly innovative organizations for driving organizational outcomes. Secondly, the extent of the inspirational motivation practised contributes to performance of organizations in highly innovative sectors. Thirdly, the dimension of inspirational motivation is a strategic resource for organizations suitable to explain variations in the organizational outcomes for highly innovative organizations. The conclusions made are however not without limitations. The paper cites several of these limitations.

First, the findings are limited by the conceptual scope adopted by the authors. Even though the literature provides several attributes of inspirational motivation, the authors adopted only three. The study is of the view that future research can address this limitation by including all the attributes of inspirational motivation in a single study. In a similar vein, the dependent variable of performance was biased towards components of performance related to the third mission of the universities and by so doing limits the extent of generalization of the findings when relating inspirational motivation to the construct of performance. Thus, future research will need to consider an expanded scope of indicators for inspirational motivation and performance.

Secondly, the findings are limited by the statistical rigour applied in data analysis to test the hypotheses of the study. Even though multiple regression analysis was used in the test of hypotheses, the authors are of the view that the application of a more robust statistical technique would explain how each of the components of inspirational motivation contributes to diverse attributes of the performance construct since in the current study, the performance construct was analysed in its composite state when being regressed against the predictor variable. Future research applying more rigorous analysis embracing a structural equation modelling would offer a better explanation of how the dimensions of inspirational motivation contribute to different aspects of the performance construct.

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