

IDEALIZED INFLUENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM WATER SERVICE COMPANIES IN KENYA

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of idealized influence on performance of Water service companies in Kenya. The study targeted four water service companies in western region, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive and correlational design. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires on a sample of 245 respondents who included top management, technical and support staff. Both stratified and simple random techniques were used. For data analysis both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The results were presented in form of tables. The findings revealed that idealised influence positively and significantly influenced performance of water service companies in Western Region, Kenya ($b=0.570$, $p=0.000$). The study thus recommends for leaders in the water sector to imbibe idealised influence as a leadership attribute which has the potential to enhance organizational performance.

Keywords: Idealised influence, Organizational performance, Water service companies.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24818/beman/2025.15.2-03>

1. INTRODUCTION

The prevailing global business environment is fast changing, complex and characterized by enormous challenges for leadership which has become the center of attention for organizations across the world. Unfortunately, the same organizations have continued to remain uncompetitive and unstable in adapting to constantly changing environmental circumstances around them (Butera, 2020). A corporate leader is a

person who inspires others to the fulfilment of the body, nature, mind and activities of the surroundings to any specific purpose in the career, life and business (Jones & Shideh 2020). Corporate leadership is characterized by the utilization of idealized influence (charisma) (Avolio & Bass 1999). Wen, Theresa, Kelana, Othman, and Syed (2019) argue that the business environment of companies has become more competitive. They emphasize the significance of a manager's leadership style in driving employee efficiencies and productivity. Leaders employ traits such as idealized influence to facilitate change and effectively manage organizational performance.

An idealized influence refers to a leader's capacity to foster collaboration and team spirit among subordinates through the promotion of shared goals and cooperation (Butera, 2020). According to Avolio and Bass (2013) Leaders display idealized influence when they are good role models by having exemplary ethical behavior. The efficacy of an organization is influenced by idealized influence when it is implemented (Kariuki, 2021). Leaders earn trust and respect of their followers by exemplifying elevated ethical standards and inspiring confidence in them through the idealization of influence (Butera, 2020). Idealized influence, according to Sheehan et al. (2020), positions administrators as role models for their staff. It discusses situations in which managers establish a benchmark for employees to strive for and shape their performance in accordance with that benchmark. Idealised influence significantly affects employee job satisfaction (Egheosasa, Ugbo & Nkenne, 2018).

Furthermore, leaders who embrace idealised influence are trusted as being good decisions makers, since they have emotional connections as well as command over subordinates (Kellner, Chew & Turner, 2018; Puni, Mohammed & Asamoah, 2018). Towler (2013) contended that where leaders were charismatic employees performed better, adhered to firm's vision more and enjoyed their assignments more.

Performance of the firm is the actual output or results of an organization as measured against its intended outputs (or goals & objectives) (Akinniyi, Adebakin & Ideraola, 2021). The performance is monitored and appraised by superior consumer worth and it can be measured in the facets of financial, customer focus, internal business process, learning and growth (Oliveria, Camilleri & Jayantila, 2021).

1.1 Statement of the problem

Over the past decade, the Republic of Kenya in East Africa has made significant political and economic reforms that have contributed to sustained economic growth, social development, and political stability gains. Despite this progress, access to piped water remains low, reaching only 33% of the population (60% in urban and 22% in rural areas) (WHO/UNICEF, 2020). Ouko (2021) noted that key strategic issues that the water service companies have failed to realize include: governance that embrace good stewardship, ethical conduct, transparency of resources and accountability of financial resources.

Studies have been done on idealized influence. However, the studies were done in different sectors and contexts such as family-owned businesses run by women in Kenya (Njau, 2020), Iranian and Australian manufacturing organizations (Afshari, 2021) and beverage manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe (Mathende & Karim, 2022). Further the studies focused on employee job performance (Langat, Linge & Sikalie, 2021) and organizational commitment (Afshari, 2021) as the dependent variable hence providing a conceptual gap. Moreover, there are conflicting findings regarding the aspect of idealized influence for instance, Ngaithe, K'Aol, Lewa and Ndwiga (2016), Mathende and Karim (2022) and Almeen, et al (2021) established that idealized influence impacted on organizational performance whereas Afshari (2021) and Abu-Orabi (2019) found that idealized influence does not influence organizational commitment and performance respectively. On the same vein Agoi (2019) found that idealized influence had a positive and insignificant effect on job satisfaction. The greatest concern in theoretical literature is the absence of extensive empirical evidence that idealized influence has on organizational performance (Archwell & Mason 2021). This study intended to fill the highlighted sectoral, contextual and conceptual gaps by examining the influence idealized influence has on performance of Water service companies in Kenya.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical review

The study was anchored on Transformational Leadership theory which postulates that the most fundamental impact of leadership is to transform followers who respond to individuals who are loyal, trustworthy, admiratory and respectful of the leader hence this term. Transformational leadership has become a prevalent method of determining the impact leaders have on organizational performance and underlying business processes. Many also have stressed that transformational leadership has over the years showed a close association with the determinants of organizational performance (Al-shibami, 2021). Transformational leadership has four main components which include idealized influence, inspiration motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Idealized influence is directly linked to the leader's ability to truly lead the way, be a role model and have charisma (Bass, 1985; Bass et al., 2003, Gill, 2006). According to Davis (2022) this theory has been criticized on the ground that individuals have the ability to influence their counterparts and superiors in the same way that they impact their subordinates and this could not be sustainable for a long-term period for the organization.

2.2 Empirical review on idealized influence and performance of organization

Hosna, Islam and Hamid (2021) argue that idealized influence has the potential to improve organizational performance by means of several mechanisms: the communication of shared goals and values, the demonstration of determination and self-assurance, and the provision of charismatic role models. This suggests that the leader predominantly utilizes charismatic tactics, which consequently have an impact on the employees' behaviour (Yue et al. 2019). A study conducted in China by Mi (2019) established that idealized influence as an aspect of transformational leadership had an influence on workers' environmental citizenship behaviour of workers. Data was obtained using a questionnaire survey of state-owned, private, foreign and foreign joint venture enterprises, the study utilized both descriptive and inferential.

A study by Raman, Peng and Chi (2021) revealed that idealized influence failed to mediate the link between academic leaders' emotional intelligence and their subordinates' job performance. Data was collected using questionnaires from five Malaysian public research universities. However, idealised influence was a mediator in this study unlike in current study where it's an independent variable.

Afshari (2021) investigated the correlation between idealized influence and commitment within the context of Iranian and Australian manufacturing organizations. This research employed a granular approach to gain a deeper understanding of leadership in two distinct cultural environments. The data collection and analysis process involved the distribution of questionnaires to all levels of two organizations, one in Australia and the other in Iran. Idealized influence did not lead to preferable organizational commitment in the Australian sample; nevertheless, it exerted a significant impact in the Iranian sample by serving as a personal example for followers.

Abu-Orabi (2019) looked at data from Jordan about how transformational leadership style affects the performance of organizations. 213 of the 249 surveys that were distributed were received and determined to be suitable for implementation. Based on the findings of a multiple regression analysis conducted on the data, it was determined that inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration were all statistically significant in their impact on the final result among the four components examined. It was not possible to identify idealized influence as a significant factor. Tetteh and Brenyah (2016) confirmed that idealized influence was positively and significantly associated to employee job satisfaction in Ghana's mobile telecommunication sector.

Mathende and Karim (2022) examined the influence of transformational leadership on work performance within beverage manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to conduct this quantitative study, a self-administered survey questionnaire was distributed to the 369 employees who comprised the sample that was selected using probability sampling. A Work performance was predicted by each transformational leadership dimension, although not to the same extent, according to the findings. Idealized influence emerged as the most significant facet of transformational leadership

that exerted a discernible influence on the work performance of beverage manufacturing companies operating in Zimbabwe amidst the pandemic.

A study was done in Dar-es-Salaam's banking sector in Tanzania by Chacha (2020) the effect idealized influence had on employee performance. The findings showed that idealized influence significantly and positively influenced employee performance thus indicating that the leaders who exhibited these traits could enhance productivity.

Using correlation research design Langat, Linge and Sikalie (2021) conducted a study in the insurance sector and indicated that employee job performance was significantly predicted by idealized influence. Similarly, Njau (2020) did a study in Thika town, Kenya, to look into how transformational leadership affects the operations of family-owned businesses run by women. A descriptive research design was implemented to examine a target population of 231 family-owned enterprises that have been under the leadership of women for a minimum of two years. For data collection, interview guides and questionnaires were utilized. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to classify insights into overarching themes and subthemes, which were subsequently represented quantitatively. According to the study's results, idealized influence had a significant and positive effect on firm performance, particularly when respondents acknowledged that women in leadership positions inspired dedication and perseverance.

Ngaithe, K'Aol, Lewa and Ndwigwa (2016) established that Idealized Influence impacted on State Owned Enterprises staff performance in Kenya. The study utilized descriptive research design sampling 163 senior managers. Data was collected using structured questionnaires. On the contrary Datche and Mukulu (2015) and Orabi (2016) established that idealized influence had a negative link to employee engagement in Kenya's civil service Agoi (2019) conducted a study at Kenyatta National hospital amongst practicing nurses on the effect organizational leadership style had on job satisfaction and confirmed that individualized consideration had a positive and insignificant effect on job satisfaction. From the foregoing empirical review, the study was hypothesized as:

H01: Idealized influence has no significant influence on performance of Water service companies in Kenya.

2.3 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework reviews the relationship between study variables (Muasya, 2020). The independent and dependent are discussed based on how they are measured and operationalized. The independent variable in this study was idealized influence. The dependent variable was performance of water service companies which were financials, customer focus, internal business processes, learning and growth as its indicators (Kaplan and Norton 1992).

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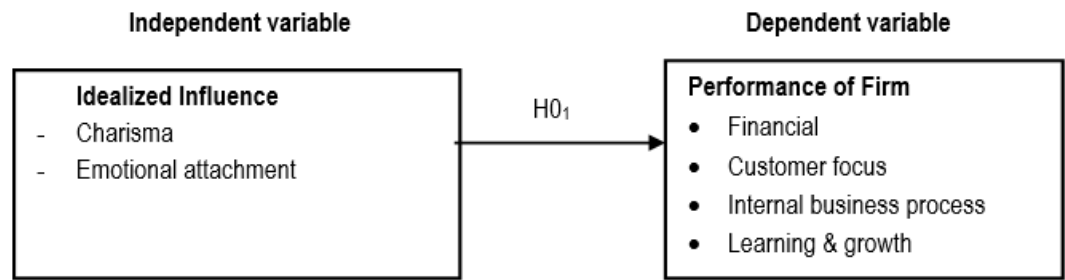


FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
Source: Authors' research

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive and correlational research design targeting 638 workers comprised of senior executives as well as technical and support personnel of four water service companies in western region Kenya. The study utilized stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The sample size of 245 was attained using Yamane's formula. For data collection, structured questionnaires were used. The questionnaire had statements on idealized influence and organizational performance. A five point Likert scale was used (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). A pilot study was done in Siaya-Bondo Water and Sanitation Company Limited where 20 respondents were selected (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008). For validity, content, construct and face validity were employed. For data analysis descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages and inferential statistics which included Pearson correlation and simple linear regression analysis were utilized. Results were presented in form of tables. The following regression model was used:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y	=	Dependent variable (Performance of water service companies)
β_0	=	Constant
β_1	=	Coefficient
x_1	=	Independent variable (Idealized Influence)
ϵ	=	Error Term

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response rate

The total number of questionnaires issued to the respondents for data collection was 208, out of 245 giving a response rate of 85%. According to Kothari (2017), a response rate of 60% to 70% is deemed satisfactory, while a response rate beyond 70% is considered exceptional.

4.2 Reliability results

Cronbach's alpha was used to test reliability of the research data. According to Bryman and Bell (2022) the variables varies between 1 denoting perfect internal reliability and 0 indicating no reliability.

The value of 0.80 is typically employed as acceptable (Satisfactory) level of internal reliability. Jackson, (2020) established that a value of 0.7 and above is strong reliability, 0.3 to 0.69 moderate and 0 to 0.29 as none or weak. For this research study, all the constructs were reliable as the Cronbach's Alpha value was above 0.7. The Cronbach alpha values were 0.843 for idealised influence and 0.899 for organizational performance.

4.3 Descriptive analysis results

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement for statements on idealised influence and organizational performance by indicating the value for frequency and percentages in the scale of 1-5 (5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-fairly agree, 2-disagree and 1-strongly disagree, f-frequency, %-percentage).

TABLE 1. IDEALIZED INFLUENCE

Statements	1 F (%)	2 F (%)	3 F (%)	4 F (%)	5 F (%)
Leaders in my organization display a sense of power and confidence when meeting workers	4(1.9%)	8(3.8%)	23(11.1%)	89(42.8%)	84(40.4%)
My supervisor is able to identify and inspire workers to feel confident at work	7(3.4%)	4(1.9%)	34(16.3%)	76(36.5%)	87(41.8%)
Workers have built trust in their leaders in my organization	4(1.9%)	12(5.8%)	38(18.3%)	97(46.6%)	57(27.4%)
My supervisor provides me with adequate resources for my job to the extent that I am committed to my work	10(4.8%)	12(5.8%)	48(23.1%)	78(37.5%)	60(28.8%)
My supervisor makes me feel appreciated and attached to my organization	8(3.8%)	11(5.3%)	25(12.0%)	84(40.4%)	80(38.5%)
I am determined to continue working for my organization for a long time to come	6(2.9%)	12(5.8%)	37(17.8%)	69(33.2%)	84(40.4%)

N=208 Key: 5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = fairly agree; 2 = disagree; 1= strongly disagree.

Source: Research Data (2024)

To assess idealized influence, six constructs' opinions were included in the tool as shown in Table 1. From the table there is evidence that majority 42.8% of the respondents agreed and 40.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that leaders in their organizations displayed a sense of power and confidence when meeting workers. Another 41.8% and 36.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that their supervisor was able to identify and inspire workers to feel confident at work.

The study also revealed that employees have developed a sense of trust in their leaders in their different firms, as seen by a consensus level of 46.6% and 27.4% of the participants who agreed and strongly agreed with this statement, respectively. Based on the survey results, it was found that 37.5% of the participants expressed agreement, while 28.8% strongly agreed, on the provision of sufficient resources by their supervisors in relation to their level of commitment towards their job. Additionally, it was noted that 40.4% of the participants expressed agreement, while an additional 38.5% strongly agreed, that their supervisor enhances their sense of appreciation and attachment to their organizations. 44 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, while an additional 33.2% agreed, that they possess an intense desire to remain employed by their respective firms for an extended duration. The same sentiments have been posited by Milelu (2019) where charisma and emotional attachment enables leaders to allocate resources in a more efficient and effective way to enhance decision making and organizational performance.

TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

No	Organizational Performance	Percentage (Frequency)				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Cost minimization has greatly been enhanced in my organization through strict monitoring	1.0% (2)	6.3% (13)	21.2% (44)	40.9% (85)	30.8% (64)
2	In my organization we consciously manage costs to make services more affordable	1.9% (4)	7.2% (15)	21.6% (45)	41.8% (87)	27.4% (57)
3	Enhanced efficiency and coordination of services have contributed to cost reduction in my organization	1.9% (4)	5.3% (11)	21.6% (45)	47.6% (99)	23.1% (48)
4	In my organization departmental revenue collection set targets is achieved	1.9% (4)	8.7% (18)	20.7% (43)	40.4% (84)	28.4% (59)
5	In my organization employees and creditors are timely paid	6.7% (14)	16.8% (35)	22.6% (47)	36.5% (76)	17.3% (36)
6	My organization has realized improved level of revenue in the last one year	4.3% (9)	11.5% (24)	18.8% (39)	41.8% (87)	23.6% (49)

Source: Research Data (2024)

The responses from indicated that majority were in agreement with the statements that Cost minimization has greatly been enhanced in my organization through strict monitoring (40.9%), that In my organization we consciously manage costs to make services more affordable (41.8%) and that enhanced efficiency and coordination of services have contributed to cost reduction in my organization (47.6%). Majority also

agreed that In my organization departmental revenue collection set targets is achieved (40.4%) and that my organization has realized improved level of revenue in the last one year (41.8%).

These findings are in agreement with those of Oliveira et al. (2021) who noted that performance can be evaluated in the aspects of financials, customer focus, internal business process, learning and growth. And, according to Bratianu (2019) financials, customer focus, internal business process, learning and growth have registered significant improvements in the organizational performance.

4.4 Inferential statistics

4.4.1 Pearson correlation analysis results

Pearson coefficient analysis was done to determine the interrelation between idealized influence and performance with results shown in table 3.

TABLE 3. PEARSON'S CORRELATION ANALYSIS RESULTS

		Idealised influence	Organizational performance
Idealised influence	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	208	
Organizational performance	Pearson Correlation	.568**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	208	208

Source: Research Data, (2024)

Idealised influence was significantly and positively correlated to performance ($r=0.568$) as indicated in table 3 above. These findings have been corroborated by Mi (2019), Mathende, and Karim (2022) and Njau (2020) who found that idealized influence was positively correlated to the organization's performance. Similarly, Langat, Linge and Sikalie (2021) confirmed that idealized influence was correlated to employee job performance ($r=0.371$, < 0.05).

4.4.2 Simple linear regression results

The study sought to determine the influence of idealized influence on performance of water service companies Kenya. The research study tested with the following hypotheses.

H01: Idealized influence has no significant influence on performance of Water Service Companies in Kenya.

TABLE 4. MODEL SUMMARY FOR IDEALIZED INFLUENCE

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.568 ^a	.322	.319	.65554	.322	98.039	1	206	.000 ^a

a. Predictors: (Constant), Idealized Influence

Source: Research Data (2024)

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The findings in the model summary table 4 above reveals that idealised influence accounts for 32.2 % variation on organizational performance of Water service companies in Kenya. The other 67.8% of the variation in idealized influence can be explained by other factors not included in the model.

TABLE 5. ANOVA BETWEEN IDEALIZED INFLUENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	42.131	1	42.131	98.039	.000 ^a
	Residual	88.525	206	.430		
	Total	130.656	207			
a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Idealized Influence						

Source: Research Data (2024)

According to Table 5. F statistic of 98.039 indicated a significant model. This was corroborated by a beta coefficient of 0.322 ($p > 0.05$), which indicates that the model employed can predict the outcome variable statistically significantly. Thus, idealized influence significantly predicts the performance.

TABLE 6. COEFFICIENTS

	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.108	.123		8.982	.000
	Idealized Influence	.570	.058	.568	9.901	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance						

Source: Research Data (2024)

In relation to the coefficient table 6, findings indicate that idealised influence has a positive and significant influence on organizational performance thus rejecting the null hypothesis. The beta coefficient for idealised influence was 0.570, $P=0.000$. This indicates that a unit increase in idealised influence would result in a considerable increase in organizational performance by 57 percent when all other factors are held constant.

The results represented in the following model:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon \text{ becomes:}$$

$$Y = 1.108 + 0.57$$

The study rejects the null hypothesis that Idealized influence has no significant influence on performance of Water service companies in Kenya as Idealized influence significantly and positively affected the performance of water service providers in the Western Region.

The findings are supported by Mathende and Karim (2022) who confirmed that Idealized influence was the most significant facet of transformational leadership that exerted a discernible influence on the work performance. Similarly Njau (2020) found that idealized influence had a significant and positive effect on firm performance. On the contrary studies by Datche and Mukulu (2015) and Orabi (2016) established that idealized influence had a negative link to employee engagement in Kenya's civil service and strategy

implementation in Jordan respectively. On the same vein Abu-Orabi (2021) noted that idealized influence did not exhibit statistical significance.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that idealized influence is positively and significantly linked to performance of water service companies in Kenya. The study underscores the significance of idealized influence as an aspect of corporate leadership that boosts performance. The study recommends for leaders to pursue idealized influence as it can enhance organizational performance. Leaders can achieve this by displaying a sense of power and confidence (Charisma), by inspiring and appreciating workers and creating a supportive climate for staff. Further studies can be done in other geographical areas and in other sectors such as SME's, manufacturing and even education sector. Additionally studies may incorporate intervening variables.

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