

INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION OF NON-ACADEMIC STAFF IN SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

Ms. JULIAN KAGURI MIRITI

Kiriri Women's University of Science and Technology
Department of Business Administration

Dr. EMILY ODHONG PhD, CHRP-K

School of Business, Economics and Tourism
Kenyatta University

Dr. SELLINE INDARA AKOYO. PhD

Kiriri Women's University of Science and Technology.
Department of Business Administration

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ABSTRACT

Employee retention remains a critical human resources challenge for private universities. Retention of skilled and experienced non-academic staff directly influences institutional stability, operational efficiency and overall effectiveness. However, private universities in Kenya frequently face challenges within non-academic staff turnover, driven by competitive market dynamics, perceived career stagnation, and limited opportunities for professional growth compared to public universities. Therefore, this study sought to examine the relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention of non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya. The study was guided by Transformational Leadership Theory which supports intellectual stimulation. A correlational research design was adopted. The target population comprised 2,230 non-academic staff from ten selected private universities in Kenya, from whom a sample of 339 was determined using Slovin's formula at a 5% margin of error. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and 237 valid responses were obtained, representing a response rate of 69.9%. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, particularly Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression. Intellectual stimulation had a mean score of 3.36 (SD = 0.68) while employee retention had a mean score of 3.39. Pearson correlation analysis showed a positive and statistically significant relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention ($r = .657, p < .001$). Multiple regression analysis further showed that intellectual stimulation made the strongest unique contribution to employee retention among the four transformational leadership dimensions ($\beta = .300, p < .001$). The overall regression model comprising the four transformational leadership dimensions explained 55.1% of the variation in employee retention ($R^2 = .551, F(4, 232) = 71.196, p < .001$). The study therefore concluded that intellectual stimulation was an important leadership practice associated with employee retention among non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya. The study recommended that universities strengthen supervisory practices that encourage creativity, innovation, problem-solving, learning and employee participation in improving work processes as a means of supporting the retention of non-academic staff.

Keywords: Intellectual stimulation, employee retention, transformational leadership, non-academic staff, private universities

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background of the study

Employee retention has become an important human resource management concern as organizations seek to maintain experienced employees and minimize the disruption associated with unwanted employee turnover. In higher education institutions, retention is particularly important because employees contribute to the continuity of administrative, technical, security, maintenance, library, information technology and other support services required for institutional operations. Evidence from higher education also shows that retention remains an important concern among non-academic employees whose roles support institutional continuity and effective service delivery (Choso & Kwasira, 2019; Makoena, Khosa and Mamuleke, 2026).

Leadership is one of the organizational factors that can shape employees' experiences at work. Transformational leadership is concerned with leadership behaviors that encourage employees to perform beyond routine expectations by providing direction, support, motivation and opportunities for development. One of its important dimensions is intellectual stimulation, through which leaders encourage employees to question established practices, think creatively, solve problems and consider alternative ways of accomplishing tasks (Tian, Iqbal, Akhtar, Qalati, Anwar, and Khan 2020; Matsila & Malebana, 2026).

In this study, intellectual stimulation refers to supervisory practices that encourage creativity, innovation, critical thinking, learning and the generation of useful ideas. The concept is particularly relevant to non-academic staff because many support functions require employees to respond to operational problems, improve service processes and adapt to changing institutional demands. The present study therefore examined whether intellectual stimulation was related to employee retention among non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya Kariuki, Wandiga, and Odiyo 2022; Matsila & Malebana, 2026).

At the global level, employee retention has increasingly been linked to the quality of leadership and the extent to which employees experience opportunities to contribute, develop and participate in organizational activities. Transformational leadership provides a useful framework for understanding these experiences because it encourages leaders to motivate employees, support their development and stimulate them to think beyond established routines. Tian et al. (2020) in a study of employees in small and medium-sized enterprises, found a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and employee retention, with organizational citizenship behavior playing a mediating role in this relationship. The study also recognized transformational leadership practices such as problem-solving, training and development and employee participation as relevant to employee experiences and retention. These findings suggest that leadership behaviors that promote creativity, new ways of thinking and employee participation can contribute to employees' positive experiences within their organizations and may therefore be relevant to their decisions to remain.

At the regional level, evidence from Africa also indicates an association between transformational leadership and employee retention. Mangisa, Schultz and van Hoek (2020), in a study of engineers at Eskom in South Africa, examined transformational leadership in relation to talent acquisition and talent retention. The study found that transformational leadership was statistically significantly related to talent retention and emphasized that retaining employees involves more than remuneration, with effective transformational leadership also being important. The relevance of this finding to intellectual stimulation lies in the broader transformational leadership approach, which includes encouraging employees to develop ideas, solve problems and contribute to organizational improvement. Similarly, Matsila and Malebana (2026), in a study of academic staff at a selected TVET college in South Africa, found that specific transformational leadership components, including intellectual stimulation, were positively related to organizational commitment. Although organizational commitment is not identical to employee retention, the finding provides recent African evidence that intellectual stimulation can be associated with employee attitudes that support organizational attachment and stability.

At the local level, the relationship between transformational leadership and employee retention has also been examined within the Kenyan context. (Kariuki et al., 2022) investigated transformational leadership and staff retention in microfinance institutions in Nairobi City County, considering the individual dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. The study found that intellectual stimulation had a positive relationship with staff retention and significantly predicted staff retention. This finding is particularly relevant to the present study because it demonstrates that intellectual stimulation can be examined as a distinct dimension of transformational leadership rather than only as part of an overall transformational leadership construct. However, Kariuki et al. (2022)) focused on microfinance institutions and staff in that sector, rather than non-academic staff in private universities. The present study therefore extends the Kenyan evidence by examining the association between intellectual stimulation and employee retention among non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Employee retention remains a critical strategic imperative for the sustainability and competitive advantage of higher education institutions globally and regionally. In Kenya, private universities face persistent employee turnover challenges that threaten institutional continuity and operational efficiency (Njiru, 2023). While academic staff turnover receives significant empirical attention, non-academic support staff including administrative, ICT, library, security, and facilities maintenance staff experience turnover rates ranging between 12% and 18% annually across selected private universities in Kenya (Maina, Nzulwa and Kwen, 2022). This turnover results in the severe depletion of accumulated institutional memory, disrupted service delivery, increased administrative overheads, and heightened recruitment and training costs, which place significant pressure on private university financial resources (Kiiru & Otieno, 2021). Odhong and Achieng, (2023) stated that institutional challenges should be addressed through leadership efficiency.

Although compensation, work environment, and job security are frequently cited as drivers of retention, contemporary human resource management research increasingly highlights the

pivotal role of immediate supervisory leadership styles - specifically transformational leadership - in shaping employees' intention to stay (Ndwiga, Kiowe and Murathe, 2022). Transformational leadership fosters organizational commitment by inspiring, motivating, and intellectually engaging employees. When non-academic employees work under passive or autocratic supervision that discourages initiative, their skills remain underutilized, leading to career stagnation, psychological detachment, and elevated turnover intentions (Mwangi, 2024). Conversely, supervisory behaviors that promote intellectual stimulation create an empowering workplace environment where non-academic staff feel valued and intellectually invested in institutional problem-solving. Where employees are not encouraged to question routine practices, consider alternative approaches or participate in solving workplace problems, their knowledge and creative potential may remain underutilized (Becker et al., 2022).

Despite the theoretical significance of leadership behavior in employee management, there remains a distinct scarcity of empirical evidence specifically addressing how intellectual stimulation influences employee retention among non-academic staff in Kenyan private universities. Existing empirical studies in Kenya have primarily examined transformational leadership as a broad, aggregate construct or focused on commercial sectors and not private universities. For instance, Kariuki, et al., (2022) examined the individual dimensions of transformational leadership among employees in microfinance institutions in Nairobi City County and established that intellectual stimulation had a significant positive effect on staff retention. Therefore, this study seeks to determine the relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention among non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

To determine the relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention among non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific Objective

To determine the relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention among non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no statistically significant relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention among non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This study is an extract from the main study that sought to establish a relationship between transformational leadership and employee retention of nonacademic staff in selected private universities in Kenya. Among the three theories that were used in the study, this chapter reviews

theoretical and empirical literature relevant to intellectual stimulation and employee retention. It also identifies the research gap addressed by the study.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory provides the principal theoretical foundation for the study. The theory explains leadership as a process through which leaders influence employees to move beyond routine expectations and pursue higher levels of motivation and performance. Intellectual stimulation is one of the central dimensions of transformational leadership. Through this dimension, leaders encourage employees to reconsider existing approaches, examine problems critically and generate alternative solutions. The theory is relevant to the present study because employees who are encouraged to think, learn and contribute ideas may develop stronger psychological connections with their work and organization.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation involves encouraging employees to think beyond established routines. It includes encouraging creativity, innovation, critical thinking and alternative approaches to workplace problems (Kariuki et al., 2022). For non-academic staff, such behaviors can be relevant to everyday institutional operations. For example, ICT employees may develop alternative solutions to technical problems, administrative employees may improve record-management procedures, maintenance employees may identify more efficient ways of completing repairs and security personnel may suggest improvements to safety procedures. The importance of intellectual stimulation therefore extends beyond academic research. It can influence how support employees approach routine and non-routine challenges. Kariuki et al. (2022) found that intellectual stimulation had a significant positive effect on staff retention in microfinance institutions in Nairobi City County, Kenya, suggesting that opportunities for employees to think creatively and contribute to problem-solving may be relevant to their decision to remain in an organization.

2.2.2 Employee Retention

Employee retention reflects an employee's willingness to remain within an organization. It is influenced by workplace experiences, satisfaction, engagement, development opportunities, relationships with supervisors and perceptions of organizational support. Retention is important because experienced employees possess institutional knowledge that may be difficult to replace. High employee turnover can also increase recruitment and training costs and disrupt organizational continuity (Kimotho & Gachunga, 2018; Kilonzo & Nyaga, 2020). In the context of transformational leadership, intellectual stimulation can support employee retention by encouraging employees to think creatively, solve workplace problems and contribute ideas for improving organizational practices (Thanh & Quang, 2022; Matsila & Malebana, 2026).

2.2.3 Intellectual Stimulation and Employee Retention

Intellectual stimulation refers to leadership behaviors that encourage employees to think critically, explore innovative ideas, challenge existing assumptions and develop creative solutions to organizational problems. Leaders who promote intellectual stimulation create opportunities for learning, professional growth and participation in decision-making processes. Such practices enhance employee engagement, competence and commitment, which are critical determinants of employee retention.

Thanh and Quang (2022) conducted a quantitative study across organizations in Asia to examine the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee outcomes. Using regression analysis, the study established that employees who were encouraged to think independently and participate in problem-solving activities reported higher levels of job involvement and engagement. These outcomes significantly increased intentions to serve longer, demonstrating the positive contribution of intellectual stimulation to employee retention. The study conducted in a general organizational context rather than within higher education institutions, thereby creating a contextual gap.

In the Kenyan context, Kimotho and Gachunga (2018) investigated leadership behaviors and employee commitment within university settings using a descriptive research design. The study found that intellectual stimulation enhanced employees' professional development and organizational commitment. Employees who experienced intellectually stimulating leadership were more likely to remain within their institutions. The study focused primarily on organizational commitment rather than employee retention, creating a conceptual gap.

Kilonzo and Nyaga (2020) examined leadership practices and employee retention in Kenyan organizations and established that employees who were encouraged to contribute ideas and participate in decision-making processes demonstrated stronger organizational attachment and lower turnover intentions. The study concluded that intellectual stimulation positively influenced employee retention by fostering a sense of value and professional growth among employees. The study conducted in a general organizational setting and did not specifically focus on private universities or non-academic staff, thereby creating contextual and population gaps.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that intellectual stimulation contributes significantly to employee engagement, commitment, innovation and retention. Most existing studies however, have been conducted in non-university settings or have focused on broader employee populations without specifically examining non-academic staff in private universities. Employee retention has often been examined indirectly through related constructs such as organizational commitment and employee engagement. The current study therefore seeks to address these conceptual, contextual and population gaps by examining the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee retention of non-academic staff in private universities in Kenya.

The findings from different contexts generally indicate that leaders who exhibit intellectual stimulation behaviors like allowing for creativity, innovations and being loyal are more likely to foster positive workplace relationships and enhance employees' willingness to remain within an organization. Variations in study settings, methodologies and findings suggest the need for further investigation in specific organizational and geographical contexts. The present study

therefore seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by examining the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee retention within the selected institutions, thereby addressing contextual gaps identified in previous studies

2.2.4 Research Gaps

First, some previous studies have examined intellectual stimulation in relation to organizational performance rather than employee retention. Studies of intellectual stimulation and retention have also been conducted in other sectors, including microfinance institutions, making it necessary to examine whether similar relationships exist within selected private universities in Kenya. University research has often focused more strongly on academic staff or institutional performance than on the retention experiences of non-academic employees. The present study addressed these gaps by focusing specifically on intellectual stimulation and employee retention of non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya.

Table 4: Literature Gaps on Intellectual Stimulation and Employee Retention

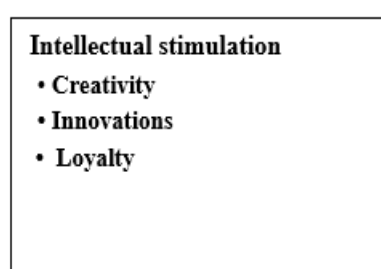
Study	Key Strength	Type of Gap	Critical Gap	Study Objective to Address the Gap
Thanh and Quang (2022)	Established that intellectual stimulation enhances employee engagement and reduces turnover intentions.	Geographical and Contextual Gaps	The study focused on organizations in Asia and did not specifically examine private universities.	To examine the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee retention of non-academic staff in private universities in Kenya.
Kilonzo and Nyaga (2020)	Established that employee participation in decision-making enhances organizational attachment and reduces turnover intentions.	Contextual and Population Gaps	The study conducted in a general organizational setting and did not specifically focus on private universities or non-academic staff.	To examine the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee retention of non-academic staff in private universities in Kenya.
S. Matsila and M.J. Malebana	Demonstrated that transformational leadership positively influences organizational commitment.	Knowledge and Population Gaps	The study focused on academic staff and did not examine the influence of intellectual stimulation on non-academic staff.	To examine the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee retention of non-academic staff in private universities in Kenya.

Kariuki, Wandiga and Odiyo (2022)	Found that intellectual stimulation significantly predicted staff retention.	Contextual Gap	The study was conducted in microfinance institutions rather than private universities and did not focus specifically on non-academic staff.	To examine the influence of intellectual stimulation and employee retention of non-academic staff in private universities in Kenya.
Mangisa, Schultz and Van Hoek (2020)	Examined transformational leadership and talent retention of engineers in South Africa and established that transformational leadership was associated with employee talent retention. The study provided empirical evidence on the importance of transformational leadership in retaining skilled employees.	Contextual and Geographical Gaps	The study was conducted in the energy sector in South Africa and focused on engineers rather than non-academic staff in private universities. It therefore did not establish whether intellectual stimulation was associated with employee retention of non-academic staff in Kenyan private universities.	To examine the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee retention of non-academic staff in private universities in Kenya.

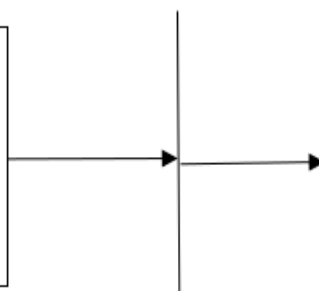
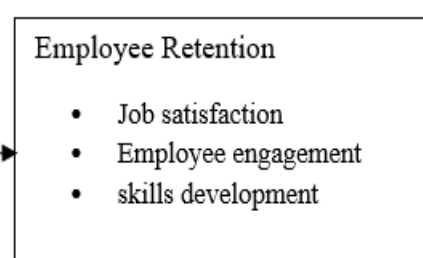
2.3 Conceptual Framework

The study conceptualized intellectual stimulation as the independent variable and employee retention as the dependent variable. The framework proposed that higher levels of intellectual stimulation would be associated with higher levels of employee retention.

Independent Variable



Dependent variable



CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a correlational research design to examine the association between intellectual stimulation and employee retention of non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya, without manipulating the variables. A correlational research design is appropriate where the researcher seeks to establish the direction and strength of association between variables as they naturally occur without experimental manipulation (Kothari & Garg, 2023). The design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to determine the direction and strength of the relationships between the study variables without manipulating them) (Kothari & Garg, 2023). The study employed a cross-sectional approach in which data were collected from respondents at a single point in time. The cross-sectional approach was suitable because the study sought to establish the existing relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention at one point in time rather than examine changes in the variables longitudinally (Ayiro, 2024). This approach was appropriate because the study examined existing associations between intellectual stimulation dimensions and employee retention rather than changes in the variables over time. The design also provided an efficient approach for collecting quantitative data within the available time and resources.

3.2 Target Population

A target population comprised the entire group of individuals or elements that poses the characteristics of interest to the researcher from which the study findings are intended to be generalized (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The target population refers to the complete group of individuals or units to which the researcher intends to generalize the findings of a study (Kothari & Garg, 2023). The target population comprised 2,230 non-academic staff from ten selected private universities in Kenya.

The population figures used for the sampling frame were planning figures compiled from institutional information and publicly available sources available during proposal development. Because uniform non-academic staff totals were not available from institutional records for every university, some figures were estimates. Consequently, this population was considered appropriate for examining the association between intellectual stimulation and employee retention of non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya.

Table 5: Target population table

University	Target Population
Kenya Methodist University (KEMU)	150
Gretsa University	155
Zetech University	250
Pan Africa Christian University (PAC)	155
Mount Kenya University	480
AMREF International University	170
KCA University	200
USIU-Africa	250
Presbyterian University of East Africa (PUEA)	130

University	Target Population
Strathmore University	290
Total	2,230

3.3 Sampling Technique

The sampling procedure was undertaken in three stages. First, ten private universities were purposively selected based on the institutional criteria described in Section 3.2. Second, Slovin's formula was used to determine the overall respondent sample from the planning population of 2,230 non-academic staff at a 0.05 margin of error (Kothari, 2019). The calculation produced a sample of 339 respondents. Third, the 339 respondents were proportionately allocated across the ten selected universities according to their respective shares of the planning population. Within the allocated institutional samples, eligible non-academic employees were selected using stratified sampling followed by simple random sampling (Kothari, 2019).

Stratified sampling was used because the non-academic workforce was heterogeneous across functional departments while employees within similar departments shared comparable work roles and conditions. The main strata were administrative, technical and support functions. Proportionate allocation was used to reflect the relative size of the institutions and functional groups. Simple random sampling was then used within the identified strata so that eligible employees had a known opportunity of selection (Kothari, 2019).

The institutional sample was not justified solely by a percentage-of-universities rule. The ten universities were selected purposively using the stated institutional criteria. The 30% rule that had appeared in the earlier proposal was therefore not used as the principal methodological justification for the final institutional sample. The sampling procedure therefore linked the purposive selection of the institutions, determination of the overall respondent sample and proportionate selection of respondents across the participating universities.

3.3 Sample Size

In determining the appropriate sample size for the study, it was found necessary to ensure that the selected samples would adequately represent the target population while remaining realistic within the available resources (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Determining an appropriate sample size is important because it enables the researcher to obtain sufficient observations for analysis while maintaining an appropriate level of precision in relation to the target population (Kothari & Garg, 2023). Given that the study was focusing on non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya, considerations were made to capture diverse employee perspectives across different functional areas. Statistical approaches to sample size determination was therefore considered to enhance the reliability and generalizability of the findings. The sample size for the study was determined using Slovin's formula which is appropriate when the population is known and the researcher desires a manageable sample size with a defined margin of error.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = 2,230

Error margin(e) = 0.05

$$n = \frac{2,230}{1 + 2,230(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2,230}{1 + 2,230(0.0025)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2,230}{1 + 5.575}$$

$$n = \frac{2,230}{6.575}$$

N = 339.16

n = 339 respondents

A sample size was determined using Slovin's formula at a 0.05 margin of error, which approximates a 95% confidence level was adopted. The resulting sample size of 339 respondents was considered adequate for the study population of 2,230 non-academic staff. Proportionate allocation was subsequently applied to distribute the 339 respondents across the ten selected universities according to their respective non-academic staff populations. Proportionate allocation ensured that institutions with larger populations contributed relatively more respondents than institutions with smaller populations, thereby maintaining the population structure within the sample (Kothari & Garg, 2023). The 339 respondents were proportionately allocated across the ten selected universities according to each institution's share of the planning population, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Proportionate Allocation Table

Private University	Non-Academic Staff	Allocated Sample (N)
Kenya Methodist University (KEMU)	150	23
Gretsa University	155	24
Zetech University	250	38
Pan African University (PAC)	155	24
Mount Kenya University (MKU)	400	73
AMREF International University	170	26
KCA University	200	30
USIU Africa	250	38

Presbyterian University of East Africa (PUEA)	130	19
Strathmore University	290	44
Total	2230	339

Source: Field data, 2026

3.4 Sampling Technique

The study covered ten selected private universities in Kenya. Respondents were drawn from the non-academic workforce in the participating institutions. The sampling procedure was undertaken in three stages. First, ten private universities were purposively selected based on the institutional criteria described in Section 3.2. Second, Slovin's formula was used to determine the overall respondent sample from the planning population of 2,230 non-academic staff at a 0.05 margin of error (Kothari, 2019). The calculation produced a sample of 339 respondents. Third, the 339 respondents were proportionately allocated across the ten selected universities according to their respective shares of the planning population. Within the allocated institutional samples, eligible non-academic employees were selected using stratified sampling followed by simple random sampling (Kothari, 2019).

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3.5 Research Instrument

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The instrument used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The intellectual stimulation section included items relating to creativity, innovation and employee contribution. The employee retention section included items addressing job satisfaction, engagement and skills development.

3.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study involving 30 non-academic staff was conducted at Tangaza University. The pilot respondents were excluded from the main study. The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was .904. The intellectual stimulation scale recorded an alpha of .886, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

3.6.1 Validity of the Study Instruments

Validity was assessed through content and construct assessment. The questionnaire was reviewed by the research supervisors and relevant experts to determine whether its items adequately represented the intellectual stimulation dimensions and employee retention of nonacademic staff in selected private universities in Kenya constructs. Feedback obtained during the pilot study further indicated that the items were clear and understandable. The recommendations arising from the review and pilot process were considered before the main questionnaire was administered. The instrument was therefore considered suitable for collecting the required information from the main-study respondents.

3.6.2 Reliability of the Study Variables

Reliability was established during the pilot study using Cronbach's alpha. All the study variables exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of .70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The reliability results were therefore retained without repeating the reliability analysis on the main-study data. The coefficients obtained during the pilot study are presented in Table

Table 1: Reliability Statistics for Employee Retention Study

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision
Intellectual Stimulation	3	0.886	Acceptable

3.7 Data Collection methods

The study used primary data which was collected digitally through structured self-administered questionnaires hosted on google forms. Informed consent was sought from all participants prior to data collection and ample time provided to allow them to read the consent letter, internalize and make decisions. After their consent, then questionnaires were issued. Questionnaires were found appropriate because they allowed the collection of data from a large number of respondents efficiently and enhance anonymity, which is important when collecting information related to leadership and employee retention. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions measured on a Likert scale and two open-ended questions after the Likert scale, for each and every measurable variable of the study. Intellectual stimulation had 3 predictor items and was adapted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) form 5x- Short (Bass & Avolio, 2004) While Employee Retention Questionnaire also had 3 predictor Items and was adapted from the Retention Scale developed by Bothma and Root (2013), which has demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's Alpha of >0.8) in previous studies.

This format facilitated quantification of responses and support statistical analysis. Questionnaires were appropriate for this study because they minimize interviewer biasness and are suitable for respondents with varied work schedules (Saunders et al., 2021). The data collected was analyzed through quantitative approaches. Quantitative data from the Likert scale questionnaires was coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means and standard deviations as well as inferential statistics where applicable, to examine the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee retention. This involved organizing responses

into themes, patterns and categories related to respondents' views on leadership practices and employee retention. The qualitative findings were used to compliment and explain the quantitative results, to enhance interpretation and provide a deeper insight into the study variables.

3.8 Data security procedure

Data security measures were applied throughout the study. Respondents were not required to provide their names. Electronic responses were protected by password access and the data were accessible only to the researcher. No Printed materials were used, were kept securely. The information collected was used for academic purposes and was handled confidentially. These measures were consistent with NACOSTI guidance requiring the security and confidentiality of research data and primary materials (NACOSTI, 2019).

3.8.1 Mode of Application

The study used structured self-administered questionnaires hosted on Google Forms to collect data from non-academic staff in the selected private universities. The online approach enabled the researcher to distribute the questionnaire to the sampled respondents and allowed respondents to complete the instrument independently at a time that was convenient for them. It also facilitated the collection and organization of responses during the data collection period. Before the questionnaires were distributed, the researcher provided the respondents with an introductory explanation of the study.

The information outlined the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation and the measures taken to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Respondents were given an opportunity to consider the information provided before deciding whether to participate. Participation was voluntary and respondents were not required to provide information that could directly identify them. The questionnaire was distributed to the sampled respondents through Google Forms with the support of research assistants.

The research assistants assisted in reaching the selected respondents and following up those who had not yet submitted their responses. Follow-up communication was undertaken during the data collection period to encourage participation and completion of the questionnaire. Respondents completed the questionnaire independently and the researcher monitored the submission of responses through the online platform. At the end of the data collection period, the submitted responses were reviewed to determine their completeness and suitability for analysis. Valid responses were subsequently coded and prepared for statistical analysis using SPSS.

3.8.2 Response Rate Management

The study targeted 339 respondents. A response rate of at least 60% was used as a practical benchmark based on the literature on survey response rates (Baruch & Haltom, 2008). The final response rate was established only after the one-month data collection period had ended. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms with follow-up reminders during the data collection period. Because the researcher was sending the forms concurrently and Google Forms recorded completed submissions rather than a verified list of individual non-

respondents, the researcher could establish the number of valid responses but could not reliably identify every person who did not respond.

Data collection was conducted for almost one month. Participation remained voluntary and follow-up communication was used to encourage completion without replacing selected respondents. At the end of the one-month data collection period, 237 valid questionnaires had been obtained from the targeted 339 respondents. The response rate was calculated as follows: Response rate = (Number of valid questionnaires received / Targeted sample size) × 100
Response rate = $(237 / 339) \times 100 = 69.9\%$ The achieved response rate of 69.9% exceeded the 60% benchmark. The 237 valid responses were therefore used for the main analysis. The response rate did not by itself demonstrate the absence of non-response bias because individual characteristics of respondents and non-respondents could not be compared.

3.9 Data Analysis and interpretation

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis involved means and standard deviations. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention.

Multiple linear regression was also used in the full study model to determine the combined contribution of the three intellectual stimulation dimensions. This enabled the unique contribution of intellectual stimulation to be assessed while the other dimensions were statistically controlled. Statistical decisions were made at the 5% significance level.

3.10 Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests refer to post estimation procedures used to check whether assumptions of regression model are met. Diagnostic tests are normally conducted before the main analysis to ensure that the data meets the necessary assumptions for statistical testing and statistical analysis, to enhance the validity of the findings. They ensure the model adequately represents the data and produces valid and reliable result (Fox,2010; Velma & Abdel-Salam,2019). If the assumptions are violated, the findings of the study may be biased or inaccurate. (C.R. Kothari & Gaurav, Garg,2014)

3.10.1 Normality Test

Normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis. Diagnostic procedures were conducted to assess whether the data met the assumptions required for the planned statistical analyses. Normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis while homoscedasticity was examined using the Breusch-Pagan test. Ayiro (2024) emphasized the importance of examining the characteristics of data before conducting statistical analyses while Kothari and Garg (2024) provided guidance on descriptive statistics, statistical inference and the assessment of data assumptions before inferential analysis. These procedures were therefore used to determine whether the data were suitable for the correlation and regression analyses applied in the study.

3.10.2 Homoscedasticity

Homoscedasticity was examined using the Breusch-Pagan test to determine whether the variance of the residuals was reasonably constant across the predicted values. The Breusch-Pagan test produced an LM statistic of 7.09 with $p = .131$. Since the p -value was greater than the .05 significance level, the null hypothesis of constant variance was not rejected. The result therefore provided no statistically significant evidence of heteroscedasticity and indicated that the homoscedasticity assumption was reasonably satisfied for the regression analysis (Ayiro, 2024; Kothari & Garg, 2024).

3.10.2 Multiple linear regression analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the influence of individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, emotional support and intellectual stimulation on employee retention. The significance of the overall regression model was assessed using the F -test from the regression ANOVA output at a 5% level of significance. The regression coefficients, t -values and p -values were used to determine the individual contribution of each intellectual stimulation dimension and to make decisions on the study hypotheses.

Regression model

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots 3.1$$

Were,

Employee Retention (ER) = Constant

X_1 = Individualized consideration

X_2 = Inspirational motivation

X_3 = Emotional support

X_4 = Intellectual stimulation

ε = error term

3.11 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to organize, summarize and present the quantitative data obtained from the respondents. The analysis involved frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, which provided a clear summary of the characteristics of the respondents and the distribution of responses across the study variables. Descriptive statistics were appropriate for presenting the observed patterns in the data before undertaking inferential analysis (Kothari, 2019; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including age, gender, department, duration of service and highest education level. Means and standard deviations were used to summarize responses relating to individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, emotional support, intellectual

stimulation and employee retention. The study employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The descriptive results were presented in tables and used to show the general pattern of respondents' perceptions of the study variables.

The questionnaire also contained a limited number of open-ended questions following the structured items. Responses to these questions were reviewed to identify recurring views and common ideas that could provide additional explanation to the quantitative findings. The responses were grouped according to emerging themes and used only as supplementary evidence to support the interpretation of the quantitative results. Selected responses were presented as illustrative quotations where appropriate, without disclosing information that could identify individual respondents

3.12 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistical procedures were used to examine the relationships between the study variables and to test the null hypotheses. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to establish the direction and strength of the relationship between each intellectual stimulation dimension and employee retention. The dimensions considered were individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, emotional support and intellectual stimulation. The correlation results provided the basis for assessing whether each dimension had a statistically significant relationship with employee retention (Kothari, 2019).

Multiple linear regression analysis was then performed to determine the combined influence of the three intellectual stimulation predictors on employee retention. Intellectual stimulation was entered as the independent variable while employee retention was treated as the dependent variable. The analysis produced the overall regression results and the contribution intellectual stimulation had on employee retention. The significance of the overall regression model was assessed using the F-test from the regression ANOVA output. The regression coefficients and their associated p-values were used when evaluating the individual hypotheses (Kothari, 2019).

The hypotheses were tested at a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = .05$). A null hypothesis was rejected where the p-value was less than .05. Where the p-value was equal to or greater than .05, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The inferential findings were presented in tables and interpreted in accordance with the study objectives and hypotheses.

Operationalization of Study Variables and Measurement

Intellectual Stimulation (IS)	Creativity	1	5-point Likert scale	Researcher-adapted questionnaire	Continuous	1–5
3.9.5	Innovation	1	5-point Likert scale	Researcher-adapted questionnaire	Continuous	1–5
	Loyalty	1	5-point Likert scale	Researcher-adapted questionnaire	Continuous	1–5
Employee Retention (ER)	Job satisfaction	1	5-point Likert scale	Researcher-adapted questionnaire	Continuous	1–5

	Employee engagement	1	5-point Likert scale	Researcher-adapted questionnaire	Continuous	1–5
	Skills development	1	5-point Likert scale	Researcher-adapted questionnaire	Continuous	1–5

Source: Researcher-adapted questionnaire

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings concerning the relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention of non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya. A total of 237 valid questionnaires were obtained from the main study, representing a response rate of 69.9%.

4.1 Respondent Profile

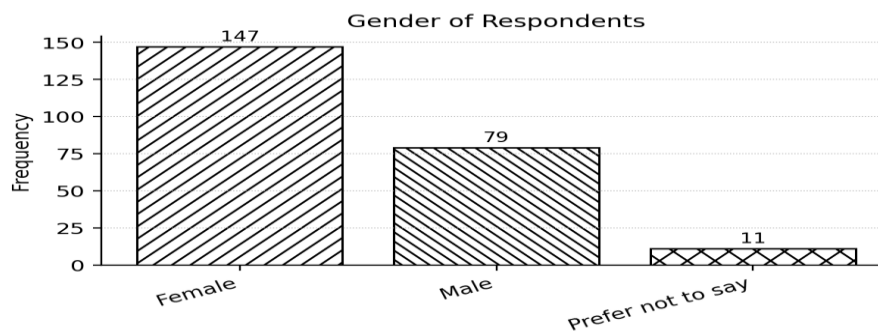
The respondents represented different age groups, functions and levels of work experience. The largest age group was 30–39 years, representing 38.8% of respondents. General maintenance accounted for 49.4%, making it the largest functional category. In terms of service duration, 51.9% of respondents had worked in their institutions for between six and ten years. The profile indicated that the study obtained responses from employees with varying demographic and work backgrounds.

4.2 Demographic statistics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents included gender, age, department/function and duration of service. These characteristics were used to describe the composition of the 237 respondents included in the main analysis. The findings are presented in the following subsections

4.2.1 Gender

The findings indicate that female respondents constituted the majority of the sample, with 147 respondents (62.0%), while male respondents accounted for 79 (33.3%). A further 11 respondents (4.6%) selected the option of preferring not to disclose their gender. The distribution of nonacademic staff in selected private universities in Kenya therefore shows that women formed the largest proportion of participants in the main study. This gender distribution is consistent with the broader staffing patterns of staff in private universities in Kenya, where studies have reported a higher representation of female employees in academic and administrative roles... The gender distribution is presented to describe the composition of the sample and is not used as an independent predictor in the hypothesis testing.



Source: Field Data (2026).

Figure 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

4.2.2 Age

The age distribution of the respondents showed that those aged 30–39 years constituted the largest age category, followed by those aged 40–49 years. Respondents aged below 30 years and those aged 50 years and above formed smaller proportions of the sample. The distribution indicates that the study captured non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya across different stages of their working lives, including younger employees who may be establishing their careers and more experienced employees who may have longer exposure to their institutions and leadership practices.

The representation of these different age groups was important to the study because employees at different stages of their working lives may differ in their experiences of leadership, workplace expectations and decisions concerning whether to remain in an organization. The distribution therefore provided a broad representation of the non-academic staff whose views were used to examine the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee retention in selected private universities in Kenya. The Table below presents the age distribution of respondents.

Table 1.1: Age Distribution of Respondents

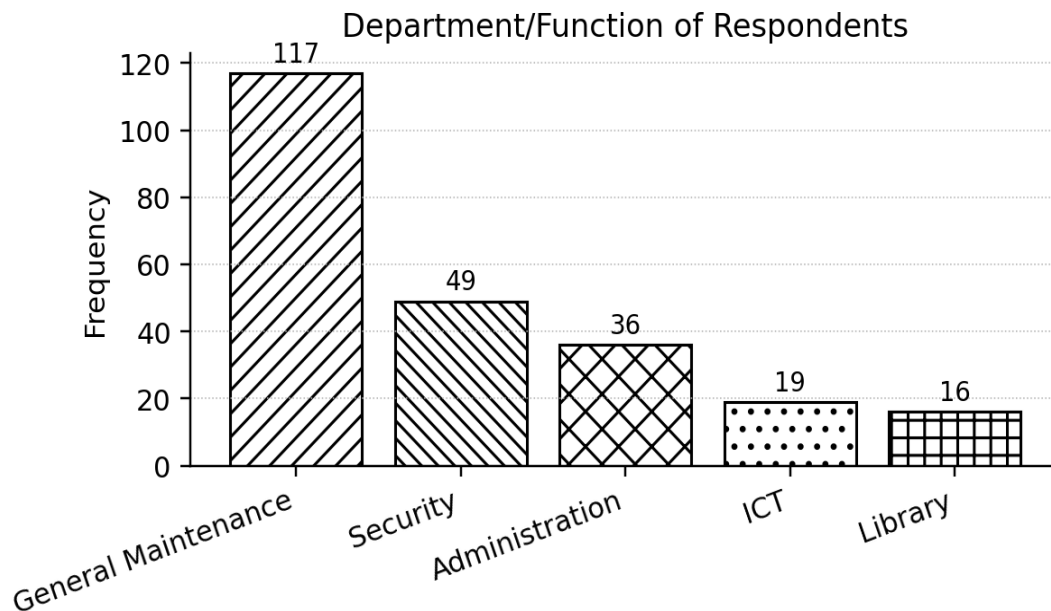
Age category	Frequency	Percentage
Below 30 years	39	16.5
30–39 years	92	38.8
40–49 years	74	31.2
50 years and above	32	13.5
Total	237	100.0

Source: Field Data (2026).

4.2.3 Departments of respondents

General Maintenance represented the largest departmental/function group, followed by Security and Administration. ICT and Library accounted for smaller proportions of the respondents. The distribution reflected the study population's focus on non-academic staff in

selected private universities in Kenya working in administrative, technical and support functions. Figure 3 presents the departmental distribution.

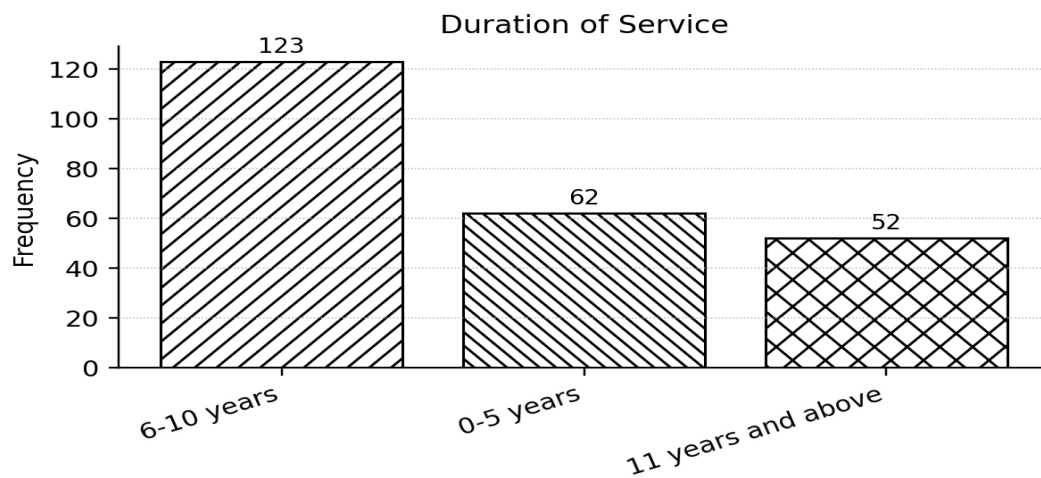


Source: Field Data (2026).

Figure 4.1 Departmental Distribution of Respondents

4.2.4 Duration of Service

The distribution of respondents by duration of service showed that more than half of nonacademic staff in selected private universities in Kenya had served in their respective institutions for 6–10 years, while the remaining respondents were distributed between those with shorter and longer periods of service. The distribution indicates that a substantial proportion of the respondents had considerable experience within their institutions and were therefore likely to have gained familiarity with the organizational environment, supervisory practices and leadership approaches. Duration of service is relevant to employee retention because employees who have spent different lengths of time within an organization may have developed varying levels of organizational experience, attachment and familiarity with its leadership practices. Longer-serving employees may also have had greater opportunity to observe and experience changes in leadership and organizational practices over time. The inclusion of respondents with different lengths of service therefore strengthened the representation of employees with varying levels of institutional experience and provided a useful basis for examining the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee retention of nonacademic staff in selected private universities in Kenya. Figure 4 present the distribution of respondents by duration of service.



Source: Field Data (2026).

Figure 4.2 Duration of Service of Respondents

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed in accordance with the four study objectives. Means and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents' perceptions of the indicators representing individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, emotional support, intellectual stimulation and employee retention. Higher mean scores indicated greater agreement with the statements. The results were interpreted together with the empirical literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

4.3.1 Intellectual Stimulation

The findings showed that intellectual stimulation was moderately positively perceived, with an overall mean of 3.36 (SD = 0.68). Creativity recorded the highest mean of 3.41 (SD = 0.74), followed by innovation with a mean of 3.35 (SD = 0.86) and loyalty with a mean of 3.32 (SD = 0.84). The results indicated that respondents rated creativity relatively more positively than innovation and loyalty. The finding was consistent with Kariuki et al. (2022) and Kilonzo and Nyaga (2020), who associated intellectual stimulation with employee retention.

Table 1.2 Descriptive Statistics for Intellectual Stimulation

Indicator	M	SD
Creativity	3.41	0.74
Innovation	3.35	0.86
Loyalty	3.32	0.84
Overall	3.36	0.68

Source: Field Data (2026).

4.3.2 Employee Retention

The findings showed that employee retention was moderately positively perceived, with an overall mean of 3.39. Employee engagement recorded the highest mean of 3.41, while job satisfaction and skills development each recorded a mean of 3.38. The results indicated that respondents generally expressed a moderately positive perception of the factors associated with their willingness to remain in their institutions. The result was consistent with the broader literature reviewed in Chapter Two, which linked supportive leadership, engagement and opportunities for development with employee retention.

Table 1.3 Descriptive Statistics for Employee Retention

Indicator	M
Job satisfaction	3.38
Employee engagement	3.41
Skills development	3.38
Overall	3.39

Source: Field Data (2026).

4.4.6 Qualitative Findings from Open-Ended Responses

The open-ended responses provided supplementary evidence to the quantitative findings. The responses were reviewed and grouped according to recurring ideas. Four recurring themes emerged: supportive leadership; motivation and recognition; employee development; and the working environment. Respondents commonly emphasized that supervisors who provided support, appreciation, opportunities for development and fair treatment encouraged employees to remain. These themes corroborated the quantitative results because the same leadership practices were reflected in the positive ratings and significant relationships observed for the intellectual stimulation leadership attributes like creativity, innovations and loyalty. The qualitative evidence therefore strengthened the interpretation by showing how respondents experienced leadership practices in their day-to-day work.

Table 1.4 Themes from Open-Ended Responses

Main theme	Sub-themes/codes	What respondents indicated
Supportive leadership	Listening, guidance, personalized support, empathy	Supervisory support made employees feel valued and encouraged them to remain
Motivation and recognition	Appreciation, recognition, encouragement, feedback, communication	Recognition and encouragement increased motivation and commitment
Employee development and participation	Training, mentoring, career development, learning opportunities, decision-making	Development opportunities encouraged employees to remain

Fairness and working environment	Fair treatment, respect, trust, teamwork, working conditions	Positive and fair environments strengthened willingness to remain
Negative supervisory experiences	Poor communication, favoritism, lack of support, criticism, lack of recognition	Negative supervisory practices reduced motivation and could encourage employees to leave

Source: Field Data (2026).

4.4 Inferential Statistics

4.4.1 Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests refer to post estimation procedures used to check whether assumptions of regression model are met. Diagnostic tests are normally conducted before the main analysis to ensure that the data meets the necessary assumptions for statistical testing and statistical analysis, to enhance the validity of the findings. They ensure the model adequately represents the data and produces valid and reliable result (Fox,2010; Velma & Abdel-Salam,2019). If the assumptions are violated, the findings of the study may be biased or inaccurate. (C.R. Kothari & Gaurav, Garg,2014)

4.4.2 Normality

Normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis. The intellectual stimulation composite had skewness of -0.41 and kurtosis of 0.46 while employee retention had skewness of -0.33 and kurtosis of 0.33. The values were within acceptable ranges and indicated that the distributions did not show substantial departure from normality. This supported the use of the planned Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression analyses (Ayiro, 2024; Kothari & Garg, 2024).

4.4.3 Homoscedasticity

Homoscedasticity was examined using the Breusch-Pagan test to determine whether the variance of the residuals was reasonably constant across the predicted values. The Breusch-Pagan test produced an LM statistic of 7.09 with $p = .131$. Since the p-value was greater than the .05 significance level, the null hypothesis of constant variance was not rejected. The result therefore provided no statistically significant evidence of heteroscedasticity and indicated that the homoscedasticity assumption was reasonably satisfied for the regression analysis (Ayiro, 2024; Kothari & Garg, 2024).

Ethical procedures included institutional research approval, NACOSTI research authorization, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and protection of respondent information.

Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire.

4.4.4 Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention. The correlation analysis for intellectual stimulation recorded a strong positive relationship with employee retention ($r = .657$, $p < .001$). The relationship was therefore positive and statistically significant. This finding means that higher levels of intellectual stimulation were associated with higher levels of employee retention among the respondents. The null hypothesis stating that there was no statistically significant relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention was therefore rejected.

4.4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the unique contribution of intellectual stimulation to employee retention while controlling for individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and emotional support. The results showed that intellectual stimulation had a positive and statistically significant standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .300$, $p < .001$). This indicated that intellectual stimulation made the strongest unique contribution to employee retention in the regression model. The result indicated that supervisory practices that encouraged creativity, innovation, critical thinking, learning and the generation of useful ideas were positively associated with employee retention. Therefore, the null hypothesis that intellectual stimulation had no statistically significant relationship with employee retention was rejected.

4.4.6 Hypothesis Testing

The study tested the null hypothesis: H_0 : There is no statistically significant relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention of non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya. The Pearson correlation result was $r = .657$, $p < .001$. Since p was less than .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study therefore established a statistically significant positive relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention.

4.4.7 Interpretation of the Findings

The findings indicate that employees who reported higher levels of intellectual stimulation also tended to report higher levels of employee retention. The result may be understood in terms of employees' opportunities to contribute ideas, solve problems and participate in improving their work. When supervisors encourage employees to think independently and consider alternative approaches, employees may experience greater involvement and value in their roles.

The regression findings provide additional evidence. Intellectual stimulation recorded a strong and unique contribution to employee retention in the model. However, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that intellectual stimulation causes retention. The correlational design supports interpretation in terms of association and predictive contribution rather than causality.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the main findings concerning intellectual stimulation and employee retention, presents the conclusion, provides recommendations and identifies areas for further research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study examined the relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention among non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya. The descriptive findings showed that intellectual stimulation had a mean of 3.36 and a standard deviation of 0.68. Creativity had the highest mean among the measured indicators at 3.41, followed by innovation at 3.35 and loyalty at 3.32.

Pearson correlation revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention ($r = .657$, $p < .001$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that intellectual stimulation is significantly and positively associated with employee retention of non-academic staff in the selected private universities. The findings suggest that supervisors who encourage employees to think creatively, develop new solutions, participate in problem-solving and question ineffective routines may contribute to a more positive retention environment. Intellectual stimulation emerged as a strong and unique contributor of employee retention of nonacademic staff in selected private universities in Kenya as included in the regression model.

The findings therefore suggest that employee retention should not be considered only in terms of financial rewards or employment conditions. The way supervisors involve employees in thinking about and improving their work may also be relevant to employees' willingness to remain. Because the study was correlational, the conclusion is limited to statistical association and predictive contribution rather than causal effect.

Overall, the study established a positive and statistically significant relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention among non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya.

The correlation of $r = .657$ ($p < .001$) demonstrated a strong positive association within the study sample, while the standardized regression coefficient of $\beta = .300$ ($p < .001$) showed that intellectual stimulation made a strong and unique contribution to employee retention of non-academic staff in selected private universities in Kenya. The central implication is that supervisors should not view non-academic employees merely as recipients of instructions. Providing opportunities to think, suggest improvements, solve problems and contributing to institutional development may form an important part of effective retention-oriented leadership.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Strengthen Supervisor Training

Private universities should incorporate intellectual stimulation into supervisory leadership development programs. Supervisors should be trained to encourage employees to analyze problems, propose alternatives and contribute practical solutions.

5.3.2 Encourage Employee Participation

Supervisors should provide opportunities for non-academic employees to participate in decisions and discussions concerning their work. Employees should have appropriate channels through which their suggestions can be considered.

5.3.3 Promote Innovation in Support Functions

Universities should encourage employees to identify better ways of delivering services. Innovation should not be restricted to academic research or teaching activities. Administrative, ICT, maintenance, security and other support functions can also benefit from employee-generated improvements.

5.3.4 Recognize Useful Ideas

Supervisors should recognize employees who contribute useful ideas or develop effective solutions to workplace problems. Recognition may take different forms depending on institutional resources.

5.3.5 Link Leadership Development to Retention Strategies

Human resource departments should consider leadership behavior as part of employee retention strategies. Supervisor development should therefore include skills related to employee participation, creativity, problem-solving and learning.

5.4 Implications for Human Resource Management

The findings have several implications for HRM practice. First, leadership development programs should move beyond general discussions of leadership and provide supervisors with practical skills for stimulating employee thinking. Second, performance management systems can incorporate behaviors that encourage employee participation and innovation.

Third, HR departments can establish mechanisms through which non-academic staff submit suggestions for improving institutional operations. Finally, retention strategies should recognize that employees may value opportunities to learn, contribute and influence how their work is performed.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Future research should examine other factors that may influence employee retention among non-academic staff, including remuneration, career progression, workload, working conditions, job security and organizational culture. Comparative studies could examine whether the relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee retention differs between public and private universities.

Future studies could also use longitudinal designs to examine whether changes in supervisory intellectual stimulation are followed by changes in employee retention over time. Researchers could further investigate whether variables such as employee engagement, psychological empowerment or organizational commitment mediate the relationship between intellectual stimulation and retention.

5.6 Contribution of the Study

The study contributes empirical evidence concerning a specific dimension of transformational leadership rather than treating transformational leadership only as a broad leadership construct.

The study also extends the discussion of employee retention to non-academic staff within private higher education in Kenya.

Most importantly, the findings identify intellectual stimulation as a leadership behavior that deserves attention in discussions of employee retention. The evidence suggests that encouraging employees to think, contribute and innovate may be relevant to creating conditions under which non-academic staff are more willing to remain in their institutions.

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