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Political Leadership and Voting Behaviour in North Eastern Region of Kenya

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POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN NORTH EASTERN REGION OF KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Today, voters tend to evaluate party leaders based on a group of categories that incudes integrity, reliability, and competence. Such evaluation criterion is hardly considered irrational. This study aimed at establishing the effect of political leadership on voting behaviour in the north eastern part of Kenya. It used descriptive research design. The target population was 159 political leaders and 354, 061 registered voters. The sample size was made of 81 political leaders and 322 registered voters. Qualitative data was analysed by use of content analysis while quantitative data was analysed by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The study established that leaders personality traits influence voting behaviour in North Eastern Kenya most followed by past performance, leadership style and leadership capacity. The study also found out that authoritarian leaders employ coercive tactics to enforce the rule and manipulate people in decision-making while transformational leaders demonstrate human understanding and guide others in creating and embracing a vision. Finally, social dominance, communication cues, political ideology, and competence were found to be a major influence on voting behaviour in North Eastern Kenya. The study recommends that political leaders should be made to avoid authoritarian leadership. Instead, they should employ servant leadership, charismatic leadership and transformational leadership. Leaders should ensure stakeholders involvement in decision-making, project implementation and avoid voter manipulations.

Keywords; Leaders' personality traits: Leadership style, political parties, voting

IINTRODUCTION

Elections are considered as major events in a political system, as they affect political behaviour in various ways. In democratic societies, voting is the principal form of political participation. As a result, the study of voting in political science is greatly specialised in various subfields. In analyzing voting patterns, its determinants like why people vote and how they make the decisions are invariably focused. Sociologists focus on the socio-economic determinants like political parties' support, gender, occasions and ethnicity, the correlation between the age, vote and classes (Lednum, 2006). On the other hand, political scientists focus on the influence of voting behaviour on political factors that include electoral campaign issues, political programs as well as and popularity of leaders of various political parties running in the elections among others (Jost, 2006).

The portrayal of a party, politics, or contesters' past performance as well as the personality of a political party leader by the media significantly influences the voting behavior of individuals. It is hard to absolutely show why individuals vote the way they do. However, there are several factors related to how political leadership affect voting behaviour (Carroll & Eichorst, 2013).

While discussing voting behaviour, we need to take cognizance of the following as they greatly shape the outcome of any voting exercise.

A leadership style may be defined as "the way a leader provides direction, implements plans, and motivates people" (Rubin, Bartels & Bommer, 2002). There are various types of leadership styles used by political leaders. These include participative, charismatic, transactional, quiet leadership, transformational, servant and situational leadership (Rubin, Bartels & Bommer, 2002). This study pegged leadership style of political leaders by to any one of the five and which includes authoritarian leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, democratic leadership and charismatic leadership.

Leadership capacity refers to the skilful, broad-based participation in leadership work (Wanyande, 2001). The measures of leadership capacity include social dominance, communication cues (such as expressions of emotion), political ideology, self-perceived political efficacy and competence. Personality traits are an organised set of characteristics possessed by a person that determine one's persona (Todorov et al., 2005). The measures of leaders personality traits include leadership decisiveness, sincerity, loyalty, charisma, peace building, patience, honesty and transparent. Voting behaviour refers to the way in which individuals tend to vote. The voting and voting pattern of individuals can be influenced by a number of factors. In this study, voting behaviour was measured by use of the number of voters in the last three general elections.

North Eastern region of Kenya

The Northern part of Kenya is an arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) that is characterized by the highest poverty rates in Kenya. Infrastructural development is very low, with very few

paved and tarmacked roads and no formal financial institutions or post offices. To many communities living in this region, the nearest health care facility is about or more than 80 kilometres away. As a result of these conditions, there are no large employers in the region, and most of the residents lack formal skills and education required in securing jobs in other regions in Kenya. For individuals who manage to get some employment, the average income mostly less than one dollar per day (Ade, 2012).

Even though, livestock are still the traditional source of income and food, it has in the recent past become increasingly unsustainable due to frequent severe droughts as a result of climate change (Odera, 2013). According to Odera, the 2008-2009 drought, for instance, had led to the death of 90 percent of livestock in the region in the year 2011. This was considered to be the worst drought in 60 years and it affected more than 12.5 million people throughout the Horn of Africa. In addition, it left between 50,000 to 100,000 people dead (Odera, 2013). Armed violence has been increasing in northern eastern region as ethnic tribes fight over limited natural resources. Counties in the Northern Kenya include Garissa, Mandera, and Wajir. The northern part of Kenya has been experiencing the lowest voter turnout of all the counties in Kenya (Odera, 2013).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the many national campaigns organised by our political leaders to sensitise people on their voting rights, the North Eastern region of Kenya has in the last decades been experiencing low voter turnout. In 2013 elections, for example, the three counties, Mandera, Wajir and Garrisa registered 23 percent, 34 percent and 35 percent voter turnout respectively making them top of the bottom five counties countrywide (Africog, 2013). According to O'Cass and Pecotich (2005), collecting information on party leaders is of the rational voting strategies. Today, most voters evaluate party leaders based on their integrity, competence and reliability. Such an evaluation criterion criteria is considered "hardly irrational". On the contrary, the assessment of candidates seems to concentrate on instrumental concerns on the way in which a political leader would conduct governmental affairs. According to Williams et al. (2009), educated citizens are the most likely voters to be concerned with the leaders' personality traits when choosing whom to vote for. This study is therefore aimed at establishing the effect of political leadership on voting behaviour in the north eastern part of Kenya.

Objectives of the Study
The general objective of this study was to establish the effect of political leadership on voting behavior in the North Eastern Kenya while specific objectives were to determine the effect of leadership style on voting behavior in the North Eastern Kenya, to establish how leadership capacity affects voting behavior in the North Eastern Kenya; to find out the effect of past performance on voting behavior in the North Eastern Kenya and to find out the effect of past performance on voting behavior in the North Eastern Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews literature related to the topic. It is governed by the main theories and policies on the human rights and the voting behaviour of mankind. The spatial theory has in the past been used in the understanding of party competition and voting behaviour for more than 3 decades (Jenkins & Sala, 1998). The factors contributing to the success of the spatial paradigm is the intuitive appeal and simplicity of its basic assumptions. The theory makes an assumption that voters consider candidates that represent their policy positions and that these candidates seek to maximise their votes. These assumptions can be considered to be clearly consonant with rational choice premises for human action (Jenkins & Sala, 1998).

However, in spite of the continued theoretical advances in the spatial modelling field, critics maintain that the theory is based on assumptions that are unrealistic on human motivation and recognition and that it fails to account for significant party and voting behaviour patterns. Some studies suggest that individuals systematically violate rationality choice assumptions with consequences for electoral choices (Hugh-Jones, 2010; Boatright, 2008). A more significant challenge to the spatial theory is expressed in various models of symbolic politics and the key idea in this approach is that individuals respond to political symbols in an effective or emotional manner that eschews rational appraisal of information on candidates as well as their policy positions. The empirical anomaly in the spatial theory is that candidates and political parties tend to adopt more extreme policy positions than those prevalent in their won electorates. Studies by Curini (2015) and Sungdai and Endersby (2003) all find such patterns of elite-voter attitude disparities.

The rational choice theory of voting was developed in the year 1957 by Downs (Downs, 1957). Downs found that in cases where voting is costly, people will think of how much they care about the outcome and the possibility that their vote will affect the outcome of the elections. In bug elections, the possibility that the vote of an individual will be pivotal is insignificant and hence it will be unlikely that the anticipated benefit of voting will outweigh the costs of voting. This means that when elections are large, people will not be having the incentive to vote. However, if no one votes, anyone vote can be a determinant of the outcome so that the incentive to participate in voting will be high (Plutzer, 2002). Downs made a suggestion that a solution based on the impression that there exist important social and private benefits to voting, which gives people the incentive to vote. Riker and Ordeshook (1968) extended the idea of Down in a useful decision to vote model that begins with the assumption that people will vote if their anticipated utility from voting is greater than their anticipated utility from not voting (Plane & Gershtenson, 2004). In this study, the theory of rational choice was used to explain the effect of political leadership on voting behaviour.

Leadership Style and Voting Behavior

According to Rubin, Bartels & Bommer (2002), a leadership style refers to the way a leader gives direction, motivates people and implements plans. A person uses leadership style to influence his followers to do his wish willingly. There are various types of leadership styles that political leaders use. These include participative, charismatic, situational, transformational, transactional, and quiet and servant leadership.

There are various approaches of leadership and management which are based on different theories and assumptions. The leadership styles used by individuals are most of the times based on a collection of values, preferences, beliefs, organisational culture as well norms, which support some styles and discourage others (Boatright, 2008).

A charismatic leader is most of the times described as an individual with new leadership strategies that are better suited to the dynamic sociological and sociological environments that we are currently living in. Simpson, French and Harvey (2002) indicate that charisma is a key component of transformational leadership. A charismatic leader influences his followers through an emotional identification process that which induces followers to surpass their own self-interests of personal gratification. Charismatic leaders play a major role in encouraging followers to more focus on group interest that self-interest and they encourage commitment to goal-oriented courses of action in a community or organization.

Leadership Capacity and Voting Behaviour

Some vocal signals' types can notify receivers about the fighting ability of the signaler or his/her social dominance. This is because acoustic properties of the signal reliably estimate the strength and size of the traits. Since these vocalisations are linearly related to the physical or physiological properties of the caller, they cannot be exaggerated or faked. Rapid recognition or detection of familiar people and communication cues like emotions expression is important in ensuring a successful and fruitful social interaction. Nevertheless, individuals dig beyond the inferences provided by the facial appearance of a person to make inferences about personal dispositions (Little et al., 2012).

In their study "effect of perceived leadership capacity on presidential politics", Popa et al. (2011) argue that leadership models' relevance in presidential leadership, and the role of perceived leadership during presidential election years, is an area of increasing important, though with limited development. They explored the association between young voters' leadership presidential candidates' assessment, John McCain and Barack Obama and, and their voting behaviour reports during the 2008 presidential election. This study established that the assessments of candidates had a significant influence on the preference of the candidate after controlling for the effect of self-perceived political efficacy and party identification. Further, the study found that political efficacy has a significant influence on individuals, intent to participate in voting during the election. Further, party affiliation generated significant differences in the leadership ratings, political efficacy, political ideology and possibility of voting variables.

Past Performance and Voting Behavior

Rather than vote for the political leaders on the basis of specific public policy issues, voters may decide to depend on general evaluations of government's performance. A presidential election is, at least in part, a referendum on the current administration performance. This referendum aspect surely is present when the incumbent president or other leaders are running for re-election. Banerjee et al., (2011) found that performance information only has an impact on voter behavior when it is directly related to voters' well-being. Their fieldwork, conducted in slums in Delhi, involved distributing report cards on legislator performance to voters prior to state legislative elections. The report cards provided the same information about the incumbent's two main challengers. Voters also received report cards for two neighboring jurisdictions. Banerjee et al (2011) found that voters opted for legislators who had a better attendance record at oversight committees like Police Vigilance Committee, and who spent the most money in the slums, rather than who spent the most overall. Voters also benchmarked legislator performance against that of neighboring jurisdictions, as well as benchmarking candidate qualifications.

Leaders Personality Traits and Voting Behavior

The political leaders' personality traits influence the followers' attitude towards their political parties. This proposition builds on the argument that political parties endorse various values and ideologies, suggests policies and are represented by political leaders also known as politicians. In theoretical terms, political parties' attributes include politicians, policies, values and ideologies. In the recent past, personality traits have been receiving increased attention from voters as they asses the performance of various political leaders.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study sought to establish the effect of political leadership on voting behaviour in the North Eastern Kenya. The independent variables in this study included leadership style, leadership capacity and leaders' personality traits. The study sought to establish how the independent variables (leadership style, past performance, leadership capacity and leaders' personality traits) influence the dependent variable (voting behaviour in the North Eastern Kenya). This relationship may be shown as in Figure 1 below.
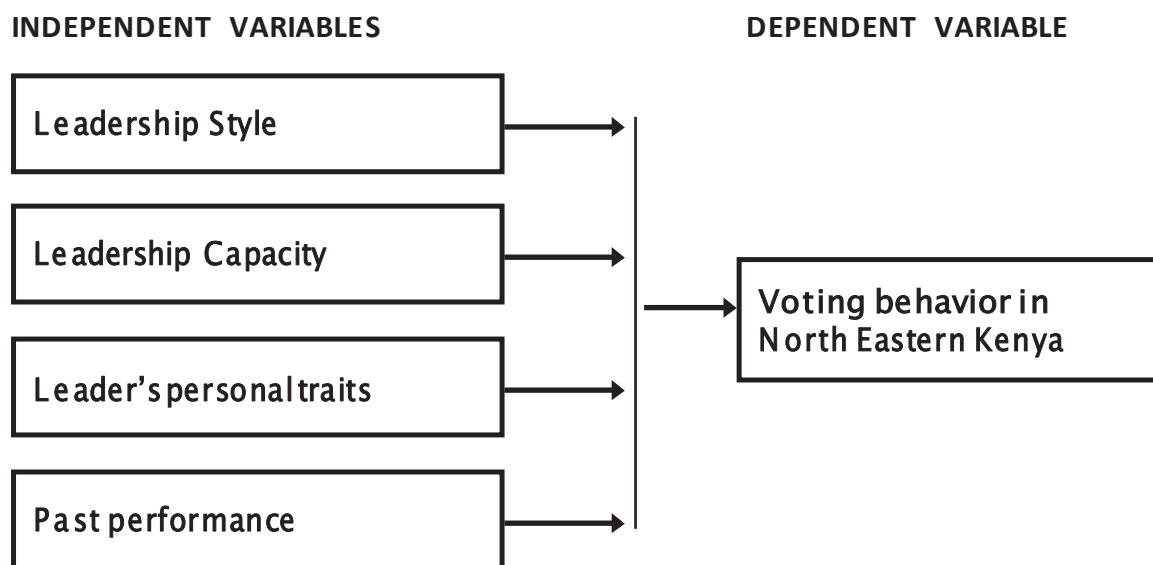

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES   **DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

Leadership Style

Leadership Capacity

Leader's personal traits   Voting behavior in North Eastern Kenya

Past performance

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study made use of a descriptive research design which involved collecting data that describes events and then organises, tabulates, presents, and provides a description for the data. Descriptive studies seek to answer the questions of whom, what, and how. According to Cooper and Schindler (2006), the descriptive design involves collection of data, which is the first step in answering the questions of the current status of the study subject. One of the advantages of descriptive research design is that it is used widely to describe attitude, characteristic, values and behaviour. In this study, the design provided the researcher with opportunity to combine both quantitative and qualitative data.

The target population of this study was 159 political leaders and registered voters in Wajir, Garrisa and Mandera Counties. Census method was used to select all the women representatives, as they are only three and hence no need for sampling. Stratified random sampling was used to select 50 percent of the MCAs and Members of Parliament. As indicated by Greener (2008), if a target population ranges from 100 to 500, 50 percent should be selected as a sample size. The sample size was therefore 81 political leaders

(3 women representatives, 9 members of parliament and 69 MCAs). The study also used stratified random sampling to select 322 registered voters from the target population.

Table 1: MPs, MCAs and Women Representatives Sample Size

	Garissa	Mandera	Wajir	Total
Members of Parliament	3	3	3	9
MCAs	23	23	23	69
Women Representatives	1	1	1	3
Total	**27**	**27**	**27**	**81**

This study used primary data that collected through semi-structured questionnaires which were administered by researcher and research assistants. According to Cooper and Schindler, (2006), the questionnaire, as an instrument of data collection puts onto consideration the study problem and the specific study objectives of the study. The questionnaires in this study comprised of both open ended and closed ended questions. The open-ended questions gave the respondents an opportunity to portray their behavior and express their feelings in relation to the research questions (Orodho, 2007).

Data from the semi-structured questionnaires was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data was analyzed by use of thematic analysis. Descriptive statistics such as mean, percentages, standard deviation, frequencies and multiple regression analysis were used in the analysis of quantitative data.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research findings and discussions were done in line with the study's research objectives. These were followed by conclusions and recommendations given being based on information generated from findings of the study.

Summary of the findings

Out of the 403 questionnaires given to the sample population, 356 questionnaires were received back as filled up while the rest were not received. This represented over 88% which according to many researchers was very good. Table 4.1 represents this information

Table 2: Response rate

	Sample Size	Responses	Response rate
Political leaders	81	66	81.48
Registered voters	322	290	90.06
Total	**403**	**356**	**88.34**

From the study as represented by table 4.1 above, Political leaders had a response rate of 81.48% and registered voters had a response rate of 90.06%. The average response rate for all the respondents was 88.34%. This response rate was an excellent representative and corresponds to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) who argued that a 50% response rate is satisfactory for analysis and reporting; a 60% is considered good and 70% and above is considered excellent.

When respondents were asked to indicate their age bracket, 47% of the political leaders indicated that they were aged between 31 and 40 years, 28.8% indicated that they were aged between 41 and 50 years, 19.7% indicated that they were aged between 20 and 30 years and 4.5% indicated that they were above 51 years of age. This shows that most of the political leaders were aged between 31 and 40 years. On the other hand, 35.2% of the voters indicated that they were aged between 31 and 40 years, 33.8% indicated that they were aged between 20 and 30 years, 155% indicated that they were aged between 41 and 50 years and the same percent indicated that they were above 51 years of age. This shows that most of the voters were aged between 31 and 40 years.

The political leaders were also asked to indicate the number of terms they had served in their positions. The findings were as shown in figure 1.
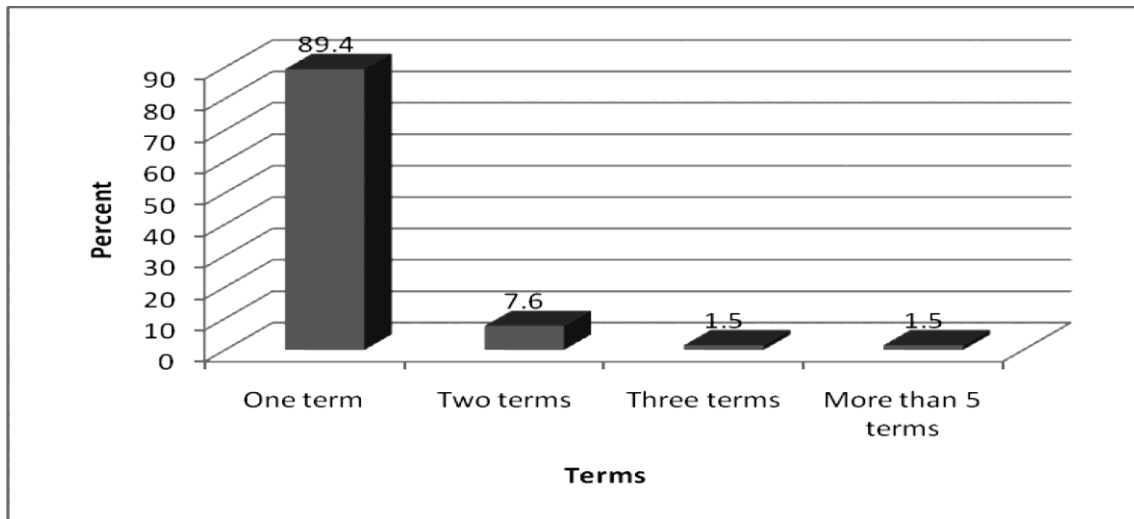
Fig. 1: Number of Terms Served

From the findings, 89.4% of the political leaders indicated that they had served for only one term, 7.6% indicated that they had served for two terms, 1.5% indicated that they had served for three terms and the same percent indicated that they had served for more than 5 years. This can be explained by the fact that the members of county assemblies, as well as women representatives, were serving for their first time in their current positions.

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was used to establish the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. The regression model was:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \pi$; Where Y is the dependent variable, voting behavior in North Eastern Kenya and X_1-X_4 are the independent variables; $\beta 1$-$\beta 4$= Regression coefficients; β_0 is the regression intercept the value of Y when X values are zero; X_1 = Leadership style; X_2= Leadership capacity; X_3= Past performance; X_4= Leaders personality and π= Error term normally distributed about the mean of zero.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.741	0.549	0.521	1.04989

The independent variables that were studied explain a variation of 54.9% of the voting behaviour in North Eastern Kenya as represented by the R^2. This therefore means that the other factors not studied in this research contribute 45.1% of voting behaviour in North Eastern Kenya.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	87.747	4	21.937	49.128	0.000
	Residual	27.238	61	0.447		
	Total	114.985	65			

Analysis of variance in regression analysis is used to test whether the model is a good fit for the data. The results proof that the model was significant since the p-value is 0.000 which is less that 0.05. The model is equally statistically significance in predicting how leadership style, leadership capacity, past performance and leaders personality influence voting behavior in North Eastern Kenya. The F-critical at 5% level of significance was 2.53. Since F-calculated (49.128) is greater than the F-critical, it shows that the overall model was significant.

Table 5: Regression Coefficient

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.361	0.856		3.926	0.000
Leadership style	0.398	0.132	0.236	3.015	0.012
Leadership capacity	0.259	0.099	0.173	2.616	0.034
Past performance	0.404	0.098	0.267	4.122	0.000
Leaders personality	0.509	0.089	0.324	5.719	0.000

The regression equation: $Y = 3.361 + 0.398 X1 + 0259 X2 + 0.404 X3 + 0.509 X4 + \varepsilon$

The above regression equation establishes that taking all factors into account (leadership style, leadership capacity, past performance and leaders personality) constant and at zero, the voting behavior in North Eastern Kenya will be 3.361 units. These findings also show that there is a positive significant relationship between leadership style and voting behavior in North Eastern Kenya as seen from the coefficient of 0.398 (p-value=0.012). In

addition, there is a positive significant relationship between leadership capacity and voting behavior in North Eastern Kenya as seen from the coefficient of 0.259 (p-value=0.034). Further, the findings show that there is a significant positive relationship between past performance and voting behavior in North Eastern Kenya as seen from the coefficient of 0.404 (p-value = 0.000). Lastly, there is a positive significant relationship between leaders personality traits and voting behavior in North Eastern Kenya as can be seen from the coefficient of 0.509 (p-value = 0.000). This infers that leaders personality traits influences voting behavior in North Eastern Kenya most followed by past performance, leadership style and leadership capacity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that leadership styles influence the voting behaviour in North Eastern Kenya. It, therefore, suggests that political leaders should avoid using authoritarian leadership and employ servant leadership, charismatic leadership and transformation leadership. The study also found that at times leaders employ coercive tactics to enforce rules and manipulate people and decision-making and thus recommend that leaders should ensure stakeholders involvement in decision-making, project implementation and avoid manipulating voters.

On leader's capacity, the study found out that social dominance and competence influence voting behaviour in North Eastern Kenya. It, therefore, recommends that political leaders should improve their social influence, leadership skills, and competence to improve the voting behaviour of community members. Finally, the study found out that leadership personality trait such as loyalty, peace building, patience, honesty and transparency significantly influence voters' behaviour. It, therefore, recommends that political leaders should develop and culture positive personality traits so as to win the confidence of voters in North Eastern Kenya.

Suggestions for Further Studies
This study suggests similar studies on the effect of political leadership on voting behaviour in other parts of the Country.

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PROFILE

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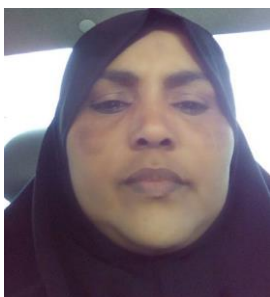Management and
Leadership Studies

Dr. Peter Paul Kithae, PhD
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Dr. Peter Paul Kithae is currently the Director, Research, Development and Innovations of the Management University of Africa; the honorary treasurer for the Kenya Red cross Society, Upper Eastern Kenya Region and a Senior Consultant with the Total Quality Management firm of Consultants. Among Dr. Kithae's published work include a

Print book on "Technology adoption and its effect on performance of Youth-Led Micro and Small Enterprises, printed in June, 2015, a paper on the Extent the government has shaped MSE's destiny towards achievement of Kenya's vision 2030; A paper on the Effect of quality improvement practices on micro and small enterprise performance and another on Unleashing Potentiality of Our Youth through Entrepreneurship Training: A Must for Realization of Kenya's Vision 2030 among others.

Dr. Kithae is a career civil servant who has successfully worked as a Chief Youth Officer for three years and later as a Principal Youth Officer for two years in charge of Youth Development services in Makueni and Kirinyaga counties respectively. He has attended a lot of seminars and workshops and has facilitated a number of them. Among these are project planning and management, performance contracting, capacity assessment training and disaster preparedness and response. He is a renowned educationist, having been a senior Lecturer at the Management University of Africa for over three years, a part-time lecturer at the University of Nairobi, Embu Campus for four years and a lecturer of Entrepreneurship, management and Business Studies in various tertiary institutions for over 18 years. Dr Kithae has also been a Senior Examiner and Team leader for Business Studies with the Kenya National Examinations Council for over 10 years and a Senior Examiner for Research methods with the Kenya Institute of Management for over five years.

Hamara Ibrahim Aden,
Real Estate Manager and Researcher

Hamara Ibrahim Aden is a management and leadership practitioner who worked as a commissioner with the Interim Independent Electoral Commission of Kenya. She is a passionate leader with a national outlook and solid hands-on experience in the electoral laws and processes. She has worked as a research assistant with the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute and is a keen follower of socio-political developments in Kenya. She is enthusiastic for new challenges and opportunities. Currently, she is an entrepreneur dealing with real estate's development in Kenya.