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**Relationship between Managers' Social Awareness and Leadership Performance in  
Kenya**

Prof. Jonathan Muema Mwanja

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Prof. Jonathan Muema Mwanja  
Department of Educational Psychology, South Eastern  
Kenya University, Kenya  
Corresponding Author's Email: [jmwania@seku.ac.ke](mailto:jmwania@seku.ac.ke)

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study focused on the relationship between manager's social awareness and leadership performance in South Eastern Kenya University, Kenya. It was conducted in South Eastern Kenya University.

**Methodology:** The researcher employed purposive and census sampling technique in selecting a sample of 71 respondents. The target population included all the 75 managers in South Eastern Kenya University. Data was collected through administration of structured questionnaires with the selected respondents. The questionnaire used a five-point range Likert scale to assess strategic managers' social awareness and leadership performance. The collected data was then processed and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 28.0 for windows. The data was presented using tables.

**Findings:** The findings of the study showed that there was a strong positive relationship ( $r = 0.744$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) between the managers' social awareness and leadership performance.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The contribution to knowledge of this paper is that it provides a theoretical and practical contribution on the importance of helping strategic managers at the South Eastern Kenya University to attain higher levels of social awareness. This is because social awareness is known to have a strong influence on leadership performance. Basically, the study contributed to a theoretical enhancement of the current level of knowledge on the existing literature on social awareness, achieved by testing empirically the managers' behaviour. In terms of the research practical contribution, the findings of the study could aid in the development of applied strategies at the work place. The findings of this study could help universities to boost the level of manager's social awareness and this in turn may lead to the improvement in leadership performance. The study recommends that: the University administration should continually train their staff on the relationship between the managers' social awareness and leadership Performance, they should employ personnel with high degree of Social awareness through conducting interviews with questionnaires that assess these attributes and invest heavily in teamwork activities so that they may have employees who have high degree of social awareness.

**Keywords:** *Social Awareness, Managers, Leadership Performance*

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## INTRODUCTION

Leadership performance is said to be the leader's potential to positively influence subordinates and the rest of the stakeholders to achieve the targets of the entity (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005) while social awareness is the ability to create and manage relationships with others and look for common point for establishing lasting relationships (Jianguanglung & Amarendra, 2017). Leadership performance is becoming very essential due to competitive working environment and globalization of the firms. The international presence of the firms creates pressure to the employees to perform and sustain it. Managers are required to meet clients' expectations and retain the employee's performance (Dobre, 2013). These managers are required to manage and solve conflicts. Managers should be able to identify problems, conflicts and to identify skill to resolve it (MindTools, 2020). To sustain a good environment within the organization, managers are expected to be in a position to come up with proper skills of handling their emotions and ensure harmony among employees' character and their own reactions (Barsade & O'Neill, 2016). Research has shown that good leadership has continued to be important for quickly changing entities (Yukl, 2002). This has caused concerted research efforts on leadership gaining speed of which emotional social awareness of managers has been identified as a critical potential thing required for effective leadership to be achieved.

Good leadership performance entails listening to the fellow workers before one makes critical decisions, which requires putting into consideration individuals' social awareness (Stadler & Dyer, 2013). Leaders are under pressure most of the time to discover solutions to ensure outcomes-driven achievements in a quickly changing work environment. Managers work to structure new skills to increase employee satisfaction, reduce cost support growth, innovation and research.

Many researchers have not attached importance to emotions in the past study of organizational management in the working environment. The workplace was seen as a acceptable environment where emotions would prevent the art of sound judgment. For this reason, emotions were not even seen as explanation for workplace phenomenon (Grandey, 2000). Effective managers also have a high level of emotional intelligence forces, among them social skills (Mwania, Mwakhamah & Nyamboga). It has now become recognized as an important part of management.

Goleman (1998) argues that a person can possess the best education in the globe but still will not make an effective manager. According to this author, social awareness is one of the attributes that form emotional intelligence force. Poor social awareness is one of the key issues of the dark part of management (Austin et al., 2007). For example, it is known that in a number of occasions for managers to show high sense of urgency to realize pressing targets, but, when juniors' expectations are not taken into account, the intended purpose may not be effectively realized. This is commonly found in settings where there is need for working together and inputs across the entity (Watkins et al., 2017). Research has established that social awareness is very important in realizing organizational targets and excelling in dynamic settings (Eby, Adams, Russell, et al. 2000). Effective strategic managers have a high level of social awareness. Social awareness has become recognized as an important part of management. Several researchers have asserted that social awareness force is a very important attribute that influence leadership performance (Jasleen & Anupam, 2019).

Several empirical studies have been conducted globally on the relationship between strategic

social awareness force and leadership performance. Findings indicate that there are many research gaps that need to be addressed. In the United States of America, they have been able to see a relationship between social awareness force and effective leadership performance. O'Boyle and colleagues (2011) established that a strong relationship between work performance and social awareness.

A study done in South Africa on social awareness force and transformation leadership and which used Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire on 314 associates, leaders, peers and subordinates revealed positive correlation between social awareness force and transformation leadership style (Vrba, 2007). In the developing economy setting like Africa, matters of leadership performance and social awareness force have not attracted reasonable research attention (Mushtaq & Aashiq, 2018), and the few studies done in the African setting, Kenya included are not in the university sector.

Kenya has not lagged behind in the desire to have effective leaders with the expected qualities and attributes of good managers (CoK, 2010). The Kenyan Constitution places leadership and integrity framework in chapter six to make sure that leaders meet the expected attributes. The clause says that all state officers are servants and not rulers and that those who misuse their offices will be disqualified from ever occupying public office any other time, over and above other punishment. There is little literature available in Kenya on the relationship between social awareness force and leadership performance. Empirical studies conducted so far are on social awareness force and leadership styles. Mwangi, Mukulu, and Kabare (2011) argue that the use of social awareness force is an important part of transformational leadership in Public Universities. These authors found that there is a significant link between social awareness force and transformational leadership.

For an organization to succeed in this transformation period, managers in all areas of employment should be emotionally stable to coordinate and manage dynamic employees and to promote both personal and leadership performance. This study is expected to improve the body of knowledge on leadership performance and strategic social awareness force. The findings may enable university leaders to improve their strategic social awareness force which would perhaps improve performance and bring change in the area of leadership performance. Leadership performance and social awareness force are becoming very important factors in leadership performance in that they give a competitive advantage to leaders in providing an environment where all the stakeholders are satisfied. This study focuses on the assessment of the relationship between managers' social awareness force and leadership performance in South Eastern Kenya University.

### **Problem Statement**

Effective leadership performance is one of the top characteristics of good performance in organizations. It enables organizations to perform better and survive in the turbulent and competitive settings. A good understanding of emotions and the abilities associated with social awareness of leaders has been found to support successful leadership. In SEKU, there are several reported cases of managers in different sections who, are unable to manage their emotions and relate well with both the juniors and the seniors. They shout at them, refuse to talk to their colleagues, cannot solve conflicts and are always complaining of how the other employees are not supporting them. Such managers have been reported to have failed in leading their sections successfully. In some cases, the management of the university has had

to do changes in leadership to prevent some sections from collapsing. Therefore, the main aim of this study was to establish whether there exists a relationship between Manager's strategic self-awareness forces and leadership performance in South Eastern Kenya University, Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Social awareness is said to be a contextualized knowledge either oneself or another person" (Sheldon, 1996). Sheldon and Johnson (1993) came up with eight types of social awareness in a two-by-two-by-two matrix. According to their matrix, a person could try to comprehend their own experience (inner perceptions and evaluation) or appearance (the way one appears outwardly) based on the perspective of the self or another person. Similarly, one may try to perceive another person's experience or outlook from the level of the self or another person. In a similar way, people explain social awareness as the procedure by which a person accurately perceives, analyze, and evaluate social stimuli from the environment. Social stimuli includes other individuals and how they interpret situations and their reactions to what one is doing and saying in the setting of the culture and environment. By this it means that both individuals have a shared point of view of both the individual's behavior during the interaction and the other individual's reaction to this behavior. This implies that getting to understand how one appears to others is an important part of social awareness.

A manager's ability to pull others to their side is very likely related to their level of social awareness. Social awareness is the technique of perceiving social environment, including understanding how a person is perceived by colleagues in that context. On this basis of their interpretation of the social context, managers must also change their own behavior as required to more effectively associate with others, which has been defined "interpersonal adaptability" (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000). This is central to the role of the manager who should utilize influence and persuasion skills to accomplish the activity through the work of their juniors. For instance, Horey, Morath, Keller-Glaze, and Fallesen (2005) established that Army leaders employ diverse actions and skills when trying to influence the people within and outside the chain of command. In addition, they also established that influence trials by Army leaders were not all the time effective and that managers sometimes use skills that do not match well the circumstance. To adjust one's behaviors well when socializing with others, they must possess an awareness of oneself, other parties in the socialization, and circumstantial factors. This means that before a person changes the way they interact with others, they should be aware of (1) their own targets and values, (2) how they are perceived by others in the socialization process, (3) what the other individuals expect and want from the socialization and from them, and (4) what socialization are determined by the social context in which the socialization are taking place. According to Zaccaro (2001), people who are in a position to accurately interpret other's reactions and accurately analyze and evaluate their intentions were able to modify their own behavior to be more productive.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This research study was guided by Goleman's (1998) emotional intelligence theory. The model has five key components of emotional intelligence forces of which social awareness is one of them. According to this theory, an emotional intelligence force is applied to achieve goals and targets, as well as bring about a happier and healthier working environment and culture. Emotions influence strategic manager's team. A good example is when a strategic manager experiencing mood swings, lacking social awareness, makes negative and biased

choices. A strategic manager, experiencing bad mood, with heightened social awareness recognizes and sets apart negativity, refocusing on the work at hand. If a strategic manager is socially aware, they know and feel well and satisfied with themselves. They are able to understand their strengths and weaknesses, how they respond in certain contexts and to specific individuals. This kind of information provides them with the ability to meet targets and create a fair and all inclusive culture. It tempers their communication skills style and enables them to listen to individuals around them. This means that one is socially aware enough to recognize when they need assistance, from where and how they can use their behavior to achieve the required outcome.

If one can understand the feelings of others and relate to them well, one can see problems and challenges from all angles and make good and objective decisions. As a strategic manager, it is critical to establish a strong rapport with team members. This is not only part of good leadership performance, but it is also necessary in boosting employee output and promoting loyalty. Possessing good social skills such as active listening, oral communication skills, nonverbal communication skills, leadership and persuasiveness helps a strategic manager to connect with their team.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study utilized *ex-post facto* research design. This is a design in which the researcher, rather than creating the treatment, examines the effects of a naturalistically occurring treatment after that treatment has occurred (Kathuri & Pals, 1993). The researcher attempted to relate this after-the-fact treatment to an outcome or dependent measure. In this kind of a research, the treatment was included by selection rather than manipulation. For this reason, it is not always possible to assume a simple causative relation between independent and dependent variables. If the relation fails to be obtained, then it is likely that no causative relationship holds. But if the predicted relationship is obtained, this does not necessarily mean that the variables studied are causally related. This research design was adopted because social awareness would be obtained after a questionnaire is administered to the respondents. Leadership performance was obtained from the managers' questionnaires. In the study, social awareness is a phenomenon in existence. Leadership performance was also in existence and so there is no manipulation of variables. Therefore, an assessment of what is already in existence was done and the cause and effect inferred.

### **Location of Study**

The study was carried out in South Eastern Kenya University. The location was chosen because the researcher is familiar with the area since he is a lecturer in the university. The area was used as a case study for in-depth analysis of strategic manager's social awareness and its relationship with leadership performance.

### **Population and Sample Size**

The target population for this study included all the managers in the 75 departments at the South Eastern Kenya University. The study targeted all the 75 managers in the 75 Departments at South Eastern Kenya University. Each of these departments is headed by one manager. 4 out of the 75 managers were used for pilot study leaving the researcher with a sample of 71. In order to ensure their different categories of the sample population are represented, the

researcher employed purposive and census sampling techniques in selecting a sample of 71 respondents. A census is a study of every unit, everyone or everything, in a population (Cantwell, 2008). It is known as a complete enumeration, which means a complete count. Census method is the method of statistical enumeration where all members of the population are studied. The advantages of census are that it provides a true measure of the population (no sampling error) and that detailed information about small sub-groups within the population is more likely to be available. The study sampled all the 75 respondents where 4 were used for pilot study.

**Table 1: Sample Size**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Target population</b>	<b>Sample population</b>
University Managers	71	71
<b>Total</b>	71	71

*Source: Researcher*

### **Instrumentation**

Data was collected through administration of structured questionnaires with the selected respondents. The questionnaire used a five-point range Likert scale to assess strategic managers' emotional intelligence forces and leadership performance. The scale sought to measure the managers' levels of agreement or disagreement with 10 statements related to their social awareness and 30 on leadership performance.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected was processed, coded and analyzed to facilitate answering the research objective and hypothesis. This was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analyses (percentages, frequencies, tables and cross-tabulations) were used to summarize and organize data and to describe the characteristics of the sample population. Inferential statistics was used in making deductions and generalizations about the whole population. Inferring sample results to the population is necessary since this research deals with a sample. The more representative a sample is, the more generalizable the results are expected to be in a population. Pearson's correlation coefficient (Aronson *et al.*, 1990) was used in testing the null hypotheses. Pearson's correlation coefficient was tested at  $\alpha = 0.05$  significance level. This was done with the aid of a computer programme - Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.0 for windows.

### Ethical Considerations

Before data collection, an introductory letter was obtained from the University. On the production of introductory letter, permission to carry out research was sought from the National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). After getting permission letter the researcher further sought permission from the University. The researcher ensured that confidentiality is honored and information obtained used only for the purpose of this study. Informed consent was sought in acquiring participants for the study, and all participants were expected to participate willingly, and were not required to include their names in the questionnaires for confidentiality purposes. The dignity, privacy and interests of participants was respected and protected. Data obtained remained confidential and participants remained anonymous.

### RESULTS

The objective for this study was to evaluate the relationship between manager’s social awareness and leadership performance in South Eastern Kenya University, Kenya. To achieve this objective, the respondents were requested to indicate the way they feel concerning the statements using 5-point Likert Scale, with Strongly agree (S.A), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly disagree (SD). The responses were presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Social Awareness and Leadership Performance**

S/N	Social Awareness	S		A		U		D		SD		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
11	I usually try to arouse enthusiasm in people	21	29.6	39	54.9	2	2.8	9	12.7	0	0.0	71	100.0
12	I prefer to do things by myself	14	19.7	30	42.3	10	14.1	13	18.3	4	5.6	71	100.0
13	I have found it a struggle total to people I don’t know	3	4.2	22	31.0	7	9.9	29	40.8	10	14.1	71	100.0
14	I have revealed little about myself	6	8.5	34	47.9	3	4.2	3	4.2	17	23.9	71	100.0
15	I have been prepared to speak up and point out problems	15	21.1	39	54.9	2	2.8	15	21.1	0	0.0	71	100.0
16	I have encouraged debate and open discussion	18	25.4	37	52.1	7	9.9	9	12.7	0	0.0	71	100.0
17	I have developed close friendships among work associates	23	32.4	31	43.7	5	7.0	12	16.9	0	0.0	71	100.0
18	I have avoided public speaking	9	12.7	24	33.8	9	12.7	23	32.4	6	8.5	71	100.0
19	I have spent a good deal of time building relationships	8	11.3	3	50.7	5	7.0	19	26.8	3	4.2	71	100.0
20	I have tended to wait for others to lead the way	6	8.5	11	15.5	8	11.3	28	39.4	18	25.4	71	100.0

#### Source: Research Data

A Table 2 shows that majority (54.9%) agreed that they usually try to arouse enthusiasm in people and have been prepared to speak up and point out problems. This was followed by 52.1% and 50.7 who agreed that they have encouraged debate and open discussion and have spent a good deal of time building relationships respectively. However 39.4% disagreed with they tend to wait for others to lead the way.

The researcher further sought to establish the relationship between social awareness and leadership performance by testing H0 below using Pearson Correlation.



*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between manager's social awareness and leadership performance in South Eastern Kenya University, Kenya.*

**Table 3: Relationship between Manager's Social Awareness and Leadership Performance**

		Social awareness	Leadership performance
Social awareness	Pearson Correlation	1	.744
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	71	71
Leadership performance	Pearson Correlation	.744	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	71	71

Source: Research Data

Table 3 shows that there is a strong positive ( $r = 0.744$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) relationship between manager's social awareness and leadership performance. Therefore we fail to accept the hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between manager's social awareness and leadership performance in South Eastern Kenya University, Kenya.

**Table 4: Multiple Regression for Social Awareness Indicators and Leadership Performance**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.014	.457		4.408	.000
1 Ability to recognize( $x_1$ )	.047	.091	.060	.520	.000
Understanding on strengths and weaknesses( $x_2$ )	.124	.093	.159	1.337	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership Performance

Source: Research Data

$$y = 2.014 + 0.047x_1 + 0.124x_2$$

y = Leadership performance

$x_1$  = Level of ability to recognize others' emotions

$x_2$  = Level of understanding on strengths and weaknesses

Table 4 shows that there is a significant association between manager's social awareness and leadership performance ( $p < 0.005$ ). On the basis of these results hypothesis  $H_0$  is rejected.

### ANOVA Test Results

The ANOVA test was used to determine whether any of the differences between the means responses are statistically significant. This was done by comparing the p-value to the

significance level to assess the null hypothesis. If the p-value level is less than the significance level of 0.05 the hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 5: ANOVA for Social Awareness**

	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Between Groups	.219	2	.109	.080	.004
Within Groups	93.528	68	1.375		
<b>Total</b>	<b>93.746</b>	<b>70</b>			

*Source: Research Data*

It can be observed that all the P-value is less than 0.05 hence the hypothesis is rejected.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The study established that there is a strong positive association between manager's social awareness and leadership performance. These results agree with Zaccaro (2001) who argued that, individuals who are able to accurately perceive other's reactions and correctly analyze and evaluate their intent was able to modify their own behavior to be more effective. Majority agreed that they usually try to arouse enthusiasm in people and have been prepared to speak up and point out problems, that they have encouraged debate and open discussion, have spent a good deal of time building relationships and that they did not tend to wait for others to lead the way. These results agree with Horey, Morath, Keller-Glaze, and Fallesen (2005) who found out that Army leaders employ a variety of actions and tactics when attempting to influence those within and outside the chain of command.

The leader's ability to influence others is related to his or her level of social awareness. Therefore, a leader must alter his or her behavior as needed to more effectively relate to others. This is because interpersonal adaptability is central to the role of the leader who must use influence and persuasion to successfully accomplish the mission through the work of his or her subordinates. To be able to adjust one's behaviors when interacting with others, one must have an awareness of oneself, other parties who are part of the interaction, and situational factors.

### **Recommendations**

The contribution to knowledge of this paper is that it provides a theoretical and practical contribution on the importance of helping strategic managers at the South Eastern Kenya University to attain higher levels of social awareness. This is because social awareness is known to have a strong influence on leadership performance. Basically, the study contributed to a theoretical enhancement of the current level of knowledge on the existing literature on social awareness, achieved by testing empirically the managers' behaviour. In terms of the research practical contribution, the findings of the study could aid in the development of applied strategies at the work place. The University administration should continually train their staff on the relationship between strategic managers' social awareness force and leadership Performance. Such training must touch on various aspects of emotional social awareness which influence leadership performance. They should provide training on improvement of social awareness among the staff so as to have managers that possess a high level of this skill to improve on work productivity, team work, and good problem-solving techniques among others.

This will in turn bring about a positive effect on employees' performance so that universities may gain a sustainable competitive advantage in the market.

The study also recommends that since there is a strong positive relationship between manager's social awareness and leadership performance. Employees should be encouraged to create interest and enthusiasm in fellow employees. This will in turn make them to appreciate the role of each member of the team which is a very important ingredient in leadership performance. They should also be encouraged to speak up and point out problems and be able to debate and open discussions. They should spend a good deal of time building relationships.

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