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## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-AWARENESS AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN COUNTY GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA**

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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-AWARENESS AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN COUNTY GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The main objective of this study was to establish the relationship between self-awareness and effective leadership in County Governments in Kenya.

**Methods:** The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The target population of the study was 3,190 County Officials. A stratified sampling technique was used to gather for proper representation of the entire population. Data collection instrument used was a questionnaire. Quantitative data was analyzed statistically yielding frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, while inferential statistical tools such as correlation and regression were used to determine and explain variable relations by use of SPSS Version 22 program. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for significant differences in three categories of county officers and data were presented in the form of tables, figures and charts.

**Results:** The results of correlation analysis showed that there was a moderately strong, positive and significant relationship between self-awareness and effective leadership. These finding implied that increase in self-awareness positively resulted to increase in effective leadership. This univariate regression results also confirmed that there is a positive linear relationship between self-awareness and effective leadership.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The study recommends county government, public institutions and private entity that wish to gain from the significant impact of self-awareness should hire employee with high self-confidence, accurate self-assessment and generally high self-awareness. The organisations should also during the induction process conduct self-awareness evaluation and offers training where necessary. Improving self-awareness of employees with enhance their leadership qualities hence benefiting the organisation.

**Key Words:** *Self-awareness, effective leadership and County Governments*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

A leader helps others to find direction and purpose through vision (Boyatzis *et al.*, 2015). It has also been established that a leader who emphasizes vision elicits adaptability and openness in those within organization (Griffin *et al.*, 2010). Consistent studies in the last twenty years have shown that interpersonal skills have taken root in the research of effective leadership (Thory, 2016; Kearns *et al.*, 2015; Bratianu, 2016). The past leaders' roles were to control, command, direct and plan the running of organizations (Porter, 2012).

This has currently changed especially in the service-oriented industries, where leadership roles do include motivation and inspiring employees (Kearns *et al.*, 2015). These new leadership trends are placing new demands on leadership training programs (Thory, 2016). As a result, research has been exploring the underlying attributes and behaviors of leaders who successfully perform these contemporary leadership roles in order to identify leadership selection and training criteria for the recruitment and development of effective leaders (Sadri, 2013; Boyatzis, Smith, & Oosten, 2013; Cavazotte, Moreno, & Hickmann, 2012).

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Effective leadership has been rated as among top characteristics of high performance organizations and has led to organizations to continually seek interventions for effective leadership capabilities to enable them perform better and survive in the turbulent and competitive environments. In this context, effective leadership skills have been described to depend partly on the understanding of emotions and the abilities associated with EI (Sadri, 2013; Boyatzis, Smith & Oosten, 2013; Cavazotte, Moreno & Hickmann, 2012).

Despite much interest in relating EI to effective leadership in organizations, there are limited studies on the EI and effective leadership done in especially in Africa. Studies show that ineffective leadership challenges that are abound in most African countries is on how they deal with it (Cascio & Luthans, 2014). They claim that the challenges are addressed politically and economically and neglect psychological approach. In Kenya, the same scenario seems to be replicated following devolution to county governments where County Governments have been mandated and entrusted with enormous public resources in order to use and deliver public services to citizenry while the effectiveness of leadership available in county governments is scanty.

The Annual Financial Reports of the Auditor General for the years 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 depict worrying trends on county government expenditures. There is non-priority spending on unnecessary items while development matters continue to suffer. Poor and ineffective leadership have been highlighted to be the core problem which exists. To ascertain the existence of ineffectiveness in leadership in county governments, it will be prudent to ascertain emotional intelligence competences and abilities of leaders in county governments in order to gauge and embrace the finding that, emotional intelligence accounts for more than 85 percent of exceptional performance in top leaders (Palmer *et al.*, 2001). This is despite the fact that this claim has been queried by some scholars that it is unlikely, as there has never been a psychological variable that has made any such prediction in a century of research in applied psychology and organization behavior (Mayer *et al.*, 2008).

Popular literature has highlighted the usefulness of this potential relationship, and drawn important theoretical links between EI and leadership effectiveness leading to organizational success (Mittal & Sindhu 2012). Therefore, the aim of this study was to find out whether there is relationship between emotional intelligence and effective leadership in County Governments in Kenya so that the findings regarding exactly how EI relates to effective leadership may lead to significant advances in leadership development and succession planning programs in County governments Kenya and also benefit stakeholders. Government of Kenya, county governments, organizations and scholars and researchers will benefit greatly on the findings of this study.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theories of Effective-Leadership**

The academic research on leadership has increased in the last decade and has seen development of several leadership theories (Dinh *et al.*, 2014). The overriding objective of these studies according to Gardner *et al.*, (2010) and Lord and Dinh, (2012), is to provide knowledge that integrates diverse leadership theories. Effective leadership is a much sought attribute and skill by many organizations because it is associated with organizational success (Day, 2014).

This study will deal with the two theories of leadership in relation to EI namely Transformational Leadership and Leader-Member-Exchange. These two theories of leadership have been cited as relationship theories because they focus on the links between leaders and followers (Kark & Shamir 2013). These leaders motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance and higher good of the task (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014). These leadership theories link the same dimensions with EI dimensions as follows:

#### **2.1.1 Transformational Leadership Theory**

This theory grounds that transformational leaders focus on the performance of group members and desire each person to fulfill their potential and that transformational leaders may persuade followers' self-concept in terms of how they relate and interact with leaders by enhancing personal identification and social identification with the organizational unit (Kark & Shamir, 2013). Bass and Riggio (2006) suggest that creating high-performance workforce has become increasingly important and to so do, business leaders must be able to inspire organizational members to go beyond their task requirements by getting leaders who are visionary, inspiring, daring, risk-takers, and thoughtful thinkers. Such leaders should have a charismatic appeal.

Research done by Twiggs, Pinos, and Olson (2006), underscores that one aspect of transformational leadership style puts consideration unto the emotional needs of each employee. For the leader to be able do this, he/she needs to recognize and have control over his/her emotions and relations with others (Harvard Business Review & Goleman, 2001). This theory supports the variables of social awareness, relationship management and social awareness.

#### **2.1.2 Leader-Member-Exchange Theory**

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory describes the dyadic process by which a leader develops a relationship with each subordinate (Furunes, Mykletun, & Einarsen, 2015). The

basic idea proposed by this theory line is that effective leadership is not only about the leader's behavior but also reliant on the perception of the followers towards the leader (Schyns *et al.*, 2008).

Clarke and Mahadi (2011) found, in a research on emotions in organizations in Malaysia, that EI has a moderating effect in Leader-Member Exchange leadership and that LMX is positively associated with organizational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, psychological well-being, and in-role performance. They suggest that EI can help leaders and subordinates to facilitate stronger identification and emotional attachments with each other. This theory supports variables of relationship management, self-awareness and self-management.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

In the recent past, extensive research has taken place in academic and practitioners' purview for new knowledge to fill existing gaps on the leader's emotional intelligence in relation to leadership and organizational effectiveness (Chopra & Kanji, 2010). This has seen sizable number of studies on the role of individuals' EI at the organizational workplace and the researchers have highlighted the importance and significance of leaders' self-awareness in the organizations (Føllesdal & Hagtvet, 2013). Dulewicz and Higgs (2015) demonstrate in their study, by use of the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ), that self-awareness makes a difference in predicting or explaining job performance of leaders and managers. Their study sample comprised managers, team leaders, salespersons and call-centre staff in large companies, and senior civil servants and Royal Navy and Police officers.

In another relevant study, Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, (2013) make a case for leaders who are aware of their emotions while dealing with their followers in all circumstances. Those effective leaders should be collaborative in their leadership rather than commanding and pace-setting leaders. They claim that successful leaders resonate well with their employees emotionally. It was also noted that dissonant leaders weaken their firm's potential for success.

The self-awareness dimension of EI has a big contribution to the definition of EI construct. The definition of EI has been developed severally from the original definition coined by Salovey and Mayer in 1990 which they defined EI as the "subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey *et al.*, 2007, p. 5). The ability to 'monitor one's own' is crucial and forms the backbone of the definition of EI and other abilities follow. Through further research on EI, the definition was later simplified by original authors to read "the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion and thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others" ( Salovey et al., 2007, p. 82). Warwick, Nettelbeck and Ward (2010) explain that the self-awareness dimension of EI has three sub variables of emotional self-awareness, accurate self-awareness and self-confidence. This is also backed by studies done Cherniss, (2010b) and Jordan *et al.*, (2010) that leader self-confidence brings hope, resilience and optimism to the followers.

Despite the generally accepted definition and model of EI other researchers offer other definitions and models which does not emphasis on the ability of self-awareness and its sub variables. Notable among them is the Bar-On (1988), which defines EI as collection of

competencies and skills and defines EI as “the cross section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands” (Bar-On, 2006, p. 14). In contrast to the earlier definitions, Kaplan *et al.*, (2010) do not support any definition but recommend a process which puts inquiry on socio-emotional variables such as knowledge, skills, abilities and other factors. Finally, the large number of definitions of EI and the salient academic divergence about what really the construct of EI has to do with different variables have created room for debates and controversies that hang around the scholarly field of EI studies.

In a study by Caldwell and Hayes (2016), to identify the relationships between self-efficacy and self-awareness and the moral obligations of leaders in understanding and developing these personal qualities, they found that leaders should strive for excellence, self-efficacy and self-awareness. By doing so, the leaders can empower themselves to unlock their own potential and the potential of their organizations and those with whom they work. This finding supports the empirical assertion that leaders who have emotion self-awareness skills are effective (Ugoani, 2017).

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The target population of the study was 3,190 County Officials. A stratified sampling technique was used to gather for proper representation of the entire population. Data collection instrument used was a questionnaire. Quantitative data was analyzed statistically yielding frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, while inferential statistical tools such as correlation and regression were used to determine and explain variable relations by use of SPSS Version 22 program. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for significant differences in three categories of county officers and data were presented in the form of tables, figures and charts.

### **4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

This section presents the findings on demographic characteristics of the respondents. The demographic characteristics include age, gender, level of education, job position and lastly the professional association of the respondents.

##### **4.1.1 Age of the Respondents**

The findings in this section revealed that more than half (59.5%) of the respondents were between 46 and 55 years, 37.2% of the respondents were between 36 and 45 years while those over 56 years were 3.3%. The finding implied that majority of the CECs, Chief Office and Directors in County Government in Kenya are middle aged and this could be attributed to a requirement that County Governments should hire experienced officers to drive the devolution and development agenda. The age of the officers correlated with the level of experience. The findings of this study concurs with those of Dokko, Wilk, and Rothbard, (2009) who found positive effect of prior related experience on task-relevant knowledge and that skill is related to higher levels of experience within well performing firms. Seniors position in government are occupied by individuals who had advanced in age since they grow



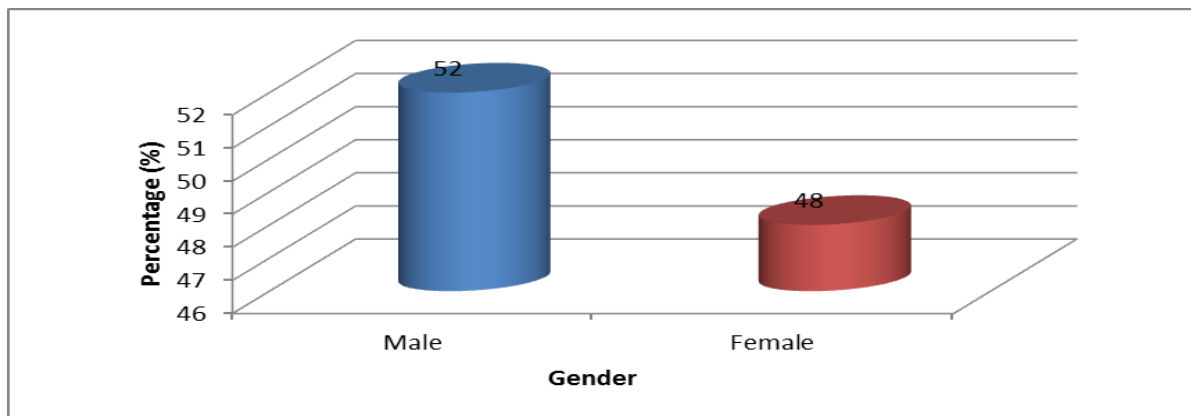
within the organisation and have better experience to handle the responsibility in such position.

**Table 1: Age of the Respondents**

	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age of the Respondents	Between 36-45	100	37.2
	Between 46-55	160	59.5
	Between 56-65	9	3.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.1.2 Gender of the Respondents

The study further sought to determine the gender of the respondents. The results showed that 52% of the respondents were male while 48% of the respondents were female. These findings implied that County Governments in Kenya had adhered to two third gender rule as stipulated in the Kenya constitution 2010. These finding further disagreed with authors such as Sud (2002) who in her study on gender disparities in the Kenyan labour market indicated that female labour force participation in the modern sector has remained below 30% over the last several years compared to men who hold a disproportionately larger share of the modern sector jobs. Both the Kenya constitution and United Nations goals advocate for gender inclusivity in all sectors of life. These findings are clear indication of the will by county government in Kenya to increase gender representation.



**Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents**

#### 4.1.3 Job Position of the Respondents

On the job position of the respondents the study established that majority of the respondents were directors at 78%, followed by CECs at 13% and finally chief officers at 10% of the total respondents. The findings implied that the study relied on information collected from top leadership in County Government in Kenya. Therefore respondents in this study were in good position to respond to questions regarding effective leadership and its relationship with emotional intelligence.

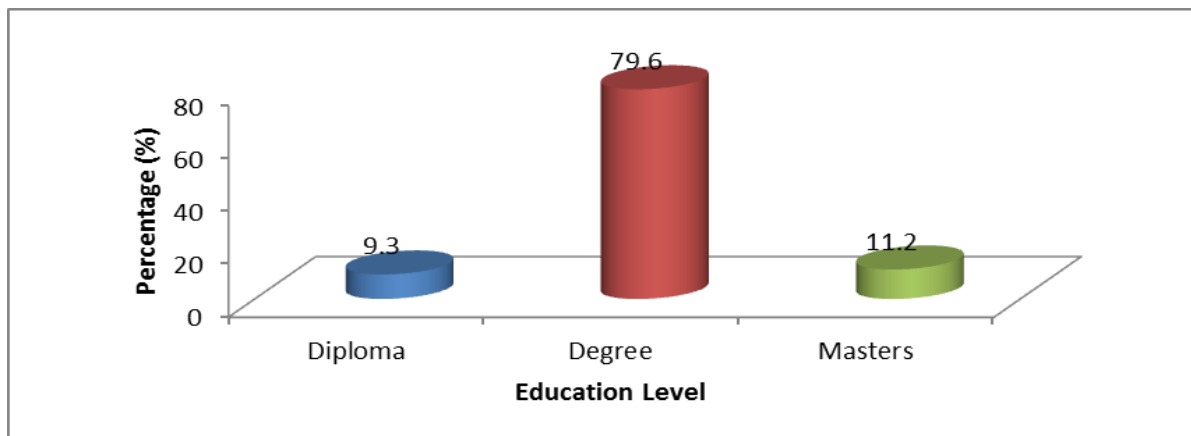
**Table 2: Job Position of the Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent
Job Position	CEC	34	13%
	Chief office	26	10%
	Director	209	78%
	Total	269	100

**4.1.4 Education Level of the Respondents**

The study further sought to establish the level of education of the respondents. The results on the education level of the respondents are presented using figure 4.2. The findings revealed that 79.6% of the respondents had degrees, 11.2% had masters level of education while 9.3% had diplomas. These finding implied that the respondents in this study were well educated and this could be one of the reasons they held top management positions in their respective County Governments.

This proposition is supported by Raymond (2008), who posited that professionalism in any occupation relates not only to the levels of education and qualifications of the workforce but also to the professional approach in the conduct of business activities. An individual’s level of education is attributed to the level of competence ability to meet professional demands of top management positions.



**Figure 2: Education Level of the Respondents**

**4.1.5 Professional Body Association of the Respondents**

The study further sought to establish whether the respondents had any association with professional bodies. The results revealed that 81.4% were member of professional bodies while 18.6% were none members of professional bodies. Association with professional bodies is attributed to high level of professionalism in their respective fields. These finding implied that majority of the County Government employed individuals associated with various professional bodies. The study finding agrees with Balthazard, Director and Excellence (2010) who found that association to professional bodies is a sign of high professionalism standards individuals intends to uphold. Both academic and professional credentials are indicative of some form of achievement, and both entitle the bearer to use certain initials after their name, but beyond that they are quite different.



**Table 3: Professional Body Association of the Respondents**

	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Member Professional Body	Yes	219	81.4
	No	50	18.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

## 4.2 Descriptive Results

### 4.2.1 Self-Awareness

The findings presented in the Table 4 shows the respondents view on the statement used to measure self-awareness among top management employees of County Government in Kenya. The study used percentages, mean and standard deviation in the analysis.

Self-awareness was further categorized into sub-variables of self-awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence. All the statements measuring self-awareness had a mean of 4, implying that majority of the respondents agreed with the statements on self-awareness. Further the study revealed a standard deviation of below 1 meaning the response varied slightly from the mean. The findings further implied that respondents scored highly on self-awareness.

The study further showed that over 50% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed on statement measuring the accurate self-assessment. The finding also revealed that the statement had average mean response of 4 confirming that majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement on accurate self-assessment. The results implied that majority of the respondents scored high on accurate self-assessment meaning they had high self-awareness.

The study sought to measure the level of self confidence among the top management in County Governments in Kenya. The study sought to establish whether respondents presented themselves with self-assurance, whether they can voice views that are unpopular and go out on a limb for what is right and finally whether they were decisive and able to make sound decisions despite uncertainties and risks. The findings showed all the statements had a mean of above 4, which confirmed that majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement. This findings implied that majority of the respondents had self-confidence.

This finding conforms to those of Dulewicz and Higgs (2015) who asserted that self-awareness makes a difference in predicting or explaining job performance of leaders and managers. The findings also concur with Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, (2013) who also posited that successful leaders resonate well with their employees emotionally. Similarly, the findings agree with Jordan *et al.*, (2010) who argue that leader self-confidence brings hope, resilience and optimism to the followers. The study findings presented in this study revealed that majority of the respondents scored highly in the variable of self-awareness and its sub-variables. The respondents were accurate in self-assessment and had high self-confidence.

**Table 4: Descriptive Results for Self-Awareness**

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
<b>Self-Awareness</b>							
I always know which emotions I am feeling and why and do realize the links between my feelings and what I think, do, and say	0.0%	0.0%	13.0%	77.7%	9.3%	4	0.5
I recognize how my feelings affect my performance I have a guiding awareness of my values and goals	0.0%	0.0%	9.3%	39.0%	51.7%	4	0.7
<b>Accurate Self-Assessment</b>							
I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses	0.0%	0.0%	18.6%	55.8%	25.7%	4	0.7
I am reflective and try to learn from experience	0.0%	0.0%	20.4%	48.0%	31.6%	4	0.7
I am open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning, and self-development	0.0%	0.0%	9.3%	76.2%	14.5%	4	0.5
I am able to show a sense of humor and perspective about Myself	0.0%	0.0%	9.3%	68.8%	21.9%	4	0.5
<b>Self-Confidence</b>							
I present myself with self-assurance; I have "presence"	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	70.3%	26.0%	4	0.5
I can voice views that are unpopular and go out on a limb for what is right	0.0%	1.9%	5.6%	55.8%	36.8%	4	0.7
I am decisive and able to make sound decisions despite uncertainties and risks	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	81.8%	16.4%	4	0.4

### 4.3 Inferential Statistics

#### 4.3.1 Correlation Results

The results further showed that there was a strong, positive and significant association between self-awareness and effective leadership as shown by  $r=0.642$ . The correlation was significant with a  $p=0.0000$  which was less than 0.05. These finding concurs with those of various authors such as Dulewicz and Higgs (2015) who asserted that self-awareness makes a difference in predicting or explaining job performance of leaders and managers. The findings also concurred with Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, (2013) who posited that successful leaders resonate well with their employees emotionally. These finding implied that increase in self-awareness positively resulted to increase in effective leadership.

**Table 5: Correlation Matrix**

		Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Management	Effective Leadership
Self-Awareness	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
Effective Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.642**	.474**	.503**	.428**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	269	269	269	269	269

### 4.3.2 Model Summary

A regression model was conducted to test the joint relationship of all the independent variables and the dependent variable. Hypotheses testing were done based on the findings of multivariate regression analysis. The results indicate that  $R = 0.722$  and  $R = 0.521$ .  $R$  value points that there is a strong relationship between self-awareness and effective leadership in county government in Kenya.  $R^2$  indicates that explanatory power of the independent variables is 0.521.

This means that 52.1% of the variation in effective leadership is explained by changes in the awareness while 47.9% of the variation in effective leadership is unexplained by the variables in the model. This finding implied that although self-awareness is an important predictor of effective leadership, it explains 52.1% implying there are other factors more important than emotional intelligent that determine effective leadership in government. The findings of the study concurred with those of McCarthy (2014) who highlights interpretations and understanding of leadership, constraints on autonomous action, knowledge and experience as such of the key factors in effective leadership in public sector. Based on these results the study tentatively concluded that county government or any organisation that seek to have effective leaders must consider their level of emotional intelligence since it's a significant predictor of emotional intelligence.

**Table 6 Model Summary for Multivariate Regression Analysis**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.722	0.521	0.513	0.20671

a. Predictors: (Constant) Self-Awareness Score

### 4.3.3 ANOVA Results

The findings of ANOVA revealed F-statistics of 71.687 with a p-value of 0.000 which was less than significance level of 0.05. The study hence concluded that the model used to link the independent variables to dependent variable had a good fitness. Similarly, F-computed of 71.687 was found to be greater than F-critical of 2.405 which further led to the conclusion that the model had good fitness. In both case the alternative hypothesis that the model had good fitness was accepted and concluded that self-awareness significant predicated effective leadership.

**Table 7 ANOVA Results for Multivariate Regression Analysis**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.252	4	3.063	71.687	0.000
	Residual	11.280	264	.043		
	Total	23.533	268			

a. Dependent Variable: Effective Leadership Score

b. Predictors: (Constant)Self-Awareness

#### 4.3.4 Beta Coefficients

In the multivariate model, the coefficient for self-awareness was  $\beta = 0.344$  was also significantly different from 0 with a p-value= 0.000 which was less than 0.05. This revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between self-awareness and effective leadership in county governments in Kenya. The study therefore rejected the null hypothesis  $H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between Self-Awareness and effective leadership in County Governments in Kenya; hence the study concludes that Self-Awareness significantly influences the effective leadership in County Governments in Kenya.

This confirms that there is a positive linear relationship between self-awareness and effective leadership. These finding concurs with those of various authors such as Dulewicz and Higgs (2015 who asserted that self-awareness makes a difference in predicting or explaining job performance of leaders and managers. The findings also concurs with Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, (2013) who also posited that successful leaders resonate well with their employees emotionally.

**Table 8 Coefficients Results for Multivariate Regression Analysis**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.647	0.364		1.78	0.076
Self-Awareness	0.344	0.046	0.403	7.553	0.000

a Dependent Variable: Effective Leadership

## 5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The study descriptive findings revealed that majority of the respondents scored highly in terms of self-awareness. Majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they were accurate in self-assessment and had high self-confidence. The study further revealed self-awareness differed based on age, gender and level of education of the respondents.

The results of correlation analysis showed that there was a moderately strong, positive and significant relationship between self-awareness and effective leadership. These finding implied that increase in self-awareness positively resulted to increase in effective leadership. This univariate regression results also confirmed that there is a positive linear relationship between self-awareness and effective leadership. This revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between self-awareness and effective leadership in county governments in Kenya.

The study rejected the null hypothesis  $H_{01}$  that there is no significant relationship between Self-Awareness and effective leadership in County Governments in Kenya; hence the study concluded that Self-Awareness significantly influences the effective leadership in County Governments in Kenya.

## 5.2 Conclusions

The research study concluded that self-awareness limits leadership in engaging in unnecessary conflicts from haters and critics hence focusing on the main targets and objectives. On the other hand individual with less self-awareness are often diverted from main focus through criticisms by seeking approval from all corners which often come through and distracts the workflow and productivity.

## 5.3 Recommendations

The study recommended that county government, public institutions and private entity that wish to gain from the significant impact of self-awareness should hire employee with high self-confidence, accurate self-assessment and generally high self-awareness. The organisations should also during the induction process conduct self-awareness evaluation and offers training where necessary. Improving self-awareness of employees with enhance their leadership qualities hence benefiting the organisation. Organisation should formulate or revise recruitment polices to ensure that self-awareness is a key consideration during recruitment process.

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