

LEADER TRAITS AND PERFORMANCE OF FOUR AND FIVE STAR RATED HOTELS IN KENYA

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Abstract

The hotel industry is a vital sector in Kenya's economy, contributing significantly to job creation, foreign currency earnings, tax revenue, and overall economic stability. Despite its importance, the industry faces internal and external challenges that threaten its competitiveness and sustainability. This study aimed to examine the relationship between leader traits and performance of four and five star hotels in Kenya. Grounded in The Resource Based View, and supported by The Big Five Personality Theory. The study used a cross sectional research design and target population of all 68 four and five star hotels in Kenya. The study collected data from three respondents per hotel who were a line manager, supervisor, and one subordinate staff member, yielding a sample size of 204 respondents. Data collection employed questionnaires, and quantitative analysis involved descriptive statistics and regression models. Findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between leader traits and hotel performance, with leader traits accounting for about 22% of the variance in performance. While leader traits had a positive but modest direct effect on performance with a path coefficient ($B = 0.136$, $p = 0.029$). Based on these insights, the study recommends that hotel management implement leadership development programs emphasizing empathy and openness among supervisors. It advocates systematic identification and enhancement of critical leader traits and encourages structured, fair recognition and constructive feedback systems. The study recommends that hotel management implement targeted leadership development programs emphasizing empathy and openness to new ideas. Cultivating these traits will empower supervisors to foster innovation, adapt to industry trends, and build stronger team relationships, ultimately driving continuous improvement and bolstering overall hotel performance in a competitive hospitality sector.

Keywords: *Leader traits, organisational performance, four and five star hotel, Kenya.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The construct of leadership finds extensive application in contexts requiring collective action toward defined objectives. According to Day & Antonakis (2022), leadership refers to an individual's personal ability to inspire others to take a course of action they would not have considered independently while Northouse (2022) conceptualizes leadership as a process whereby an individual exerts influence over a group to achieve common goals. Yukl (2020) defines leadership as a process involving persuasion of others to comprehend and achieve

consensus on necessary actions and methods, while simultaneously facilitating individual and collective efforts toward shared objectives. Rahim (2020) characterizes leadership as an interactive influence process occurring when individuals, within specific contexts, accept another as their leader to accomplish common goals. Leadership may also be understood as an individual's capacity to influence group members toward goal attainment (Day et al., 2021). Rost and Barker (2022) describe leadership as a relational influence dynamic between leaders and followers, characterized by mutual goals and authentic commitment to their realization. They further conceptualize leadership as a dynamic exchange wherein leaders and followers mutually shape each other, with contextual factors moderating their relationship. Leadership encompasses the competencies and capabilities leaders demonstrate to influence groups toward vision or goal achievement (Avolio & Yammarino, 2021).

The Kenya Vision 2030 national development plan projects an annual economic growth of 10 per cent for the hotel industry, one of the sub sectors in the tourism sector. The hotel and tourism sector is a major economic contributor to the country's GDP, accounting for approximately 10% and directly employing about one million people (Tourism Research Institute, 2021). The recovery of the sector and its associated projections hinged on the resumption of regular economic activities, the reopening of the economy, and the execution of the Economic Recovery Strategy. However, the uncertainty surrounding the 2022 general elections adversely affected the business.

Early research on leaders' personal qualities and leadership approaches focused primarily on individuals' cognitive abilities (Stogdill, 1948). Recently, "there has been growing interest in how personality variables influence job performance and leadership (Judge et al., 2021; Wilmot et al., 2019). This new research has coalesced around the premise that personality traits fall under five major categories: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (McCrae & Sutin, 2018; Soto & John, 2019; Zhu, 2025; Alnafisah, 2026). Individual differences represent consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, or behaviours known as traits, which foster leadership capabilities and effectiveness in both group and organisational contexts (Badura et al., 2022; Härtel et al., 2024; Javalagi et al., 2024). According to Northouse (2022), personality traits comprise a set of invisible characteristics and practices that underlie relatively stable patterns of behaviour in response to ideas, objects, or people in a given environment. Abrahams (2024) and Sosnowska et al. (2021) extend this argument by stating that traits refer not only to mean differences in

behavioural tendencies between people but also to meaningful within person variability across situations. Since people possess different cultural heritage and socialisation experiences, their backgrounds tend to impart certain attitudes, values, norms, and ultimately behaviours. These differences nurture individual personalities, which in turn determine individual actions, reactions, and behaviours under varying circumstances, including their interactions within work contexts (Damti & Hochman, 2022; Javalagi et al., 2024).

The performance of hotels in Kenya is critical to the nation's economy, contributing significantly to GDP and employment (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). In this competitive landscape, performance is multidimensional, best understood through customer satisfaction, profitability, and the development of new products. In the four and five star hospitality segment, customer satisfaction is the primary driver of loyalty and repeat business. Research by Otieno (2023) highlights that in Kenya's luxury hotels, guest satisfaction hinges on personalized service quality, responsiveness, and tangible amenities. High satisfaction levels directly correlate with increased occupancy rates and positive word of mouth referrals, essential in an era dominated by online reviews (Mody & Gomez, 2020). Strategies focusing on customer retention such as loyalty programs and bespoke guest experiences have proven effective in expanding the customer base amidst intense competition from alternative accommodations like Airbnb (Kimani et al., 2022).

1.Statement of the Problem

Kenya's hotel industry is a key contributor to the national economy, accounting for approximately 13.7% of GDP, generating about 12% of total wage employment, and ranking as the third largest source of foreign exchange earnings in the country (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2023; Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage, 2024). Within this sector, four and five star hotels play an especially important role in supporting tourism growth, premium hospitality services, employment creation, and foreign exchange inflows. However, despite operating in the same macroeconomic, regulatory, and security environment, these hotels show markedly different performance outcomes. While some maintain high occupancy levels and financial stability, others experience unstable demand, financial distress, or even closure, often leading to employee redundancies (Mbugua & Wainaina, 2024). This variation suggests that internal organizational factors may be critical in determining hotel performance.

Although hotel performance has received considerable scholarly attention in Kenya (Nyambane & Bichanga, 2020; Waweru & Omwenga, 2021; Mwangi et al., 2022; Kamau, 2023; Ochieng, 2024), important gaps remain. For instance, Kiplagat and Cheruiyot (2020) recommended further research on guest safety and security in 3–5 star hotels, indicating that this area remains underexplored despite its operational and performance implications. Similarly, Njuguna et al. (2021) called for more studies on non financial strategic drivers such as innovation, human resource management, and customer orientation. Onyango and Wambua (2022) also noted gaps in strategic planning, employee skills and knowledge, and customer satisfaction as factors influencing hotel and restaurant performance. Despite these contributions, there remains limited empirical evidence in the Kenyan context on how leader traits influence the performance of four and five star hotels. At a broader level, continued underperformance in this segment could undermine tourism growth, threaten employment opportunities, and weaken Kenya's foreign exchange earnings. Therefore, understanding the role of leadership related factors is essential for improving hotel sustainability and protecting the sector's contribution to the economy. This study addresses the identified gap by empirically examining the effect of leader traits on the performance of four and five star hotels in Kenya.

1.1 Research Specific Objectives

To determine the relationship between leader traits and performance of four and five star rated hotels in Kenya.

II.LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Big Five Personality Theory)

The Big Five Personality Theory, widely referred to as the Five Factor Model (FFM), is a psychological taxonomy that organizes human personality into five broad, relatively stable dimensions. It organizes human personality into five broad, bipolar dimensions: Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. It posits that an individual's personality is not a collection of random habits but a structured system of traits that influence how they think, feel, and behave in various situations. This theory serves as the theoretical anchor for the Independent Variable (Leader Traits). It moves beyond the antiquated "Great Man" theories, which offered vague lists of virtues, and instead provides a scientifically validated taxonomy. The theory posits that a leader's performance and by

extension, the organizational performance of the hotel (profitability, guest satisfaction, and innovation) is predicted by their specific standing on these five traits continuums. It suggests that leadership effectiveness in the high pressure environment of four and five star hotels is not accidental but rooted in stable psychological predispositions (Soto, 2019).

According to Soto and John (2017), the Big Five is taxonomy of "broad personality domains" that represent the most important individual differences in social and emotional life. They describe these traits as relatively stable patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that distinguish individuals from one another. Robbins and Judge (2019) defined the model as the definitive framework for understanding the relationship between personality and job performance. They conceptualized the Big Five as the underlying psychological structure that dictates how an individual reacts to situations and interacts with others, serving as a primary predictor of leadership emergence. Widiger (2017) defined the Five Factor Model as a hierarchical organization of personality traits, where the five domains represent the highest level of abstraction. He argues that these traits are "endogenous," meaning they are biologically based tendencies that interact with the environment to produce specific adaptations and behaviours.

2.2 The Resource Based View (RBV)

The Resource Based View (RBV) is a strategic management framework that suggests a firm's competitive advantage and performance are primarily determined by its internal resources and capabilities, rather than external market conditions. In this study on Kenyan four and five star hotels, RBV posits that Organizational Performance (the Dependent Variable) is not just a result of being in a good location or having a 5 star rating. Instead, performance measured by Profitability, Customer Satisfaction, and New Product Development is driven by unique, intangible internal assets. Specifically, it frames the Leader (and their Traits/Style) as a critical "human capital resource" that competitors cannot easily replicate, thus driving superior performance (Barney & Harrison, 2020).

The Resource Based View (RBV) is consistently defined in recent strategic management literature as a model that fundamentally argues that firms are heterogeneous bundles of resources and capabilities, a view supported by Hitt, Xu, and Carnes (2016) who state that when these internal assets meet the VRIN criteria (valuable, rare, inimitable, and non substitutable), they enable the implementation of value creating strategies that ultimately

yield sustainable performance advantages. Furthermore, Barney (2018), reflecting on his foundational work, refined the definition by emphasizing that resources are not merely static assets but dynamic "enablers" of strategy, explaining that the theory accounts for how firms generate "economic rents" (profitability) by exploiting internal differences, such as unique leadership talent and capabilities. Finally, Sirmon, Hitt, and Ireland (2017, cited in Bromiley & Rau, 2019) expand the definition to focus on the active process of managing the firm's resource portfolio, underscoring that superior performance depends not just on resource possession but on the strategic structuring, bundling, and leveraging of those resources for example, how a leader utilizes their specific traits to drive innovation and superior customer satisfaction.

2.4 Leader Traits and Hotel Performance

The debate about leadership, especially on the issue of nature versus nurture, is a never ending one. Although discussions revolving around the leader traits paradigm seem to have reached some kind of consensus with the introduction of behavioural theories, there is still a lingering belief that personality characteristics, and specifically individual traits, are predictors of particular leadership styles. Consequently, research on the personality traits of leaders was revived through the likes of Judge, Bono, Ilies and Gerhardt (2002) who reported a correlation between four of the big five leader traits (extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness) and experience as well as leadership emergence and effectiveness. Other authors (Murphy & Dziewieczynski, 2005; Andersen, 2006; and Morgeson et al., 2007), hold a contrary opinion arguing that there is no empirical evidence to demonstrate the relationship between personality inventories as predictors of job performance and other organisationally relevant criteria. Kaiser et al. (2008) similarly contributed to the traits and leadership debate by stating that while an individual's personality perhaps suggested leader like qualities, it was unclear whether possession of the so called superior traits was a predictor of effectiveness in an organisational setting. In a follow up study on the leader traits paradigm, Judge et al (2009) argued that leaders with the "right" traits were more likely to thrive and survive because they were in a better position to adapt and in so doing would benefit themselves and their organisations. This perspective is relevant to the hotel industry given its dynamism, volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and competitiveness.

Additionally, the hotel industry is regarded as one of the most demanding professions in the world (Riggs & Hughey, 2011) because of factors such as long, irregular, and unsocial

working hours; the need to work under pressure; irregular holidays; heavy workloads; family unfriendly work shifts; low job stability and security; relatively low pay; and seasonality. According to Brien et al. (2015), these characteristics are obvious predictors of employee turnover in the industry. In such an environment, personality characteristics of team members, especially the leaders, may affect team effectiveness (Wang & Zhang, 2015).

Various authors have studied the impact of leader traits on the team and organisational performance across industries. Payne (2021), for example, reported that in the construction industry, the personality traits of conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness, and extraversion had a positive and significant effect on team performance. Characterized by high labor intensity, both the hospitality and construction sectors rely heavily on cohesive group dynamics; however, systemic variations in individual personality profiles can critically disrupt the performance of organizational work teams. This aligns with the foundational premise of Goodstein and Lanyon (1999), which has been extensively validated by contemporary dispositional research (Barrick et al., 2013; Judge & Zapata, 2015). These scholars demonstrate that personality traits function as cognitive and affective frameworks through which employees perceive, interpret, and navigate their workplace environments, ultimately dictating how they experience and respond to professional demands. Contrasting deterministic environmental frameworks, Diener and Lucas (2019) conceptualize personality traits as enduring, cross situational clusters of cognitive, affective, and behavioral modalities that systematically govern individual action. Within organizational behavior literature, this dispositional anchor has been increasingly linked to normative compliance; multiple empirical inquiries validate that latent personality structures significantly modulate both ethical and unethical conduct within corporate ecosystems (Anwar & Shah, 2018; Simha & Parboteeah, 2020).

Augmenting this macroscopic consensus, contemporary localized research within the Southeast Asian service sector demonstrates that specific dimensions of the Five Factor Model namely, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness exert a statistically significant, positive influence on the ethical decision making frameworks of hospitality personnel (Amaludin & Mehon, 2020; see also dynamic iterations by Elshaer et al., 2023). Collectively, these findings underscore that individual differences serve as a primary boundary condition for behavioral integrity in high stakes service environments.

Bello and Bello (2021) investigated the correlation between personality factors and work performance among hotel employees in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study used a quantitative research methodology, using structured questionnaires to gather data from a total of 332 workers working in 63 hotels located throughout the 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Lagos State. The obtained data was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS SEM). The findings indicate that three out of the five hypotheses examined, namely conscientiousness, openness to experience, and extraversion characteristics, had a positive association with work performance in the context of hotels in Lagos State, Nigeria. This suggests that displaying conscientious traits, such as dependability, organisation, reliability, ambition, perseverance, and hard effort, tends to improve job performance in the hotel business in Lagos State. Furthermore, displaying traits of openness to experience, such as being innovative, inquisitive, creative, sophisticated, and versatile, has a tendency to enhance work performance in the hotel business in Lagos State. Moreover, it is crucial for work success in hotels in Lagos State to exhibit extraversion qualities, such as sociability, enthusiasm, and boldness. This research provides valuable insights into the correlation between personality characteristics and work performance among hotel employees in Lagos State. The current study focuses on four and five star hotels in Kenya, while Bello and Bello (2021) targeted hotels in Lagos State, Nigeria. This difference in location and hotel rating might influence the leadership traits valued by employees. The current study looks at leader traits, whereas Bello and Bello (2021) focused on employee personality traits. This shift in focus could reveal different aspects of the leader performance relationship..

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research philosophy

This study is anchored in the positivist research philosophy. The positivist paradigm allows researchers to formulate testable hypotheses derived from existing theoretical frameworks (Moon et al., 2019). Within this philosophical tradition, these hypotheses are empirically evaluated, and subsequently accepted or rejected, utilizing quantitative and statistical methodologies to address the research objectives. As articulated by Kennedy (2017), the positivist approach mandates that the inquiry remain objective and value free, requiring the researcher to maintain an independent stance detached from the subject matter. Furthermore, it posits that the ultimate objective of research is to establish nomothetic generalizations akin to those in the natural sciences, placing an exclusive emphasis on quantifiable observations suitable for statistical analysis (Kennedy, 2017). This study adopts a positivist approach to

examine leader traits, and organizational performance within Kenya's four and five star hotels. This philosophy is uniquely appropriate because the conceptual model relies on established theories to deduce hypotheses that will be subject to empirical verification. Additionally, positivism aligns with the study's objective to leverage quantifiable data within a regression model, thereby prioritizing empirical evidence and statistical analysis to validate the findings.

3.2 Research Design

A cross sectional survey methodology was adopted. A cross sectional survey design captures data from a sample population at a single point in time. This design is highly advantageous for simultaneously examining multiple variables within a large sample, thereby providing a comprehensive, time bound overview of the phenomena under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Cross sectional surveys are primarily descriptive and offer a robust foundation for establishing correlations and determining the status quo among various factors at a specific juncture (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). Consequently, this methodology was deemed appropriate for the current study, as it facilitates the efficient assessment of population characteristics and enables an empirical investigation into the relationships between leader traits, and organizational performance within Kenya's four and five star hotels.

3.3 Target Population

The study population consisted of all 68 hotels that are officially classified as 4 and 5 star by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) Kenya. This refers to the 46 4 star as well as 22 5 star hotels as per the Tourism Regulatory Authority, (2023). These hotels are set up at rigorous TRA standards on the scale of facilities, the service hours and the facilities themselves room amenities, specialty food, top tier leisure facilities like spas, gyms and meeting rooms. Furthermore, human capital requirements differ between the two segments, with four star hotels demanding an 80% trained workforce and five star establishments requiring 90%. Given the relatively small, well defined population size of this luxury hospitality segment, a census methodology was adopted for this study.

3.4 Sample Frame and Sampling Technique

A sample typically represents a subset of a population from which generalizable conclusions are drawn (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Saunders et al., 2023), this study adopted a census approach at the organizational level. By including all 68 four star and five star hotels classified by the Tourism Regulatory Authority of Kenya, the research eliminates institutional level sampling error within this specific industry segment (Saunders et al., 2023). To identify individual respondents within these institutions, purposive sampling was deployed as the most methodologically appropriate technique. This approach is highly efficient when a researcher requires key informants embedded within the research context to provide specialized information that is unavailable from other population members (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Given that this study seeks to capture rich, contextualized data regarding complex constructs namely leader traits and organizational performance it was imperative to target participants who possess highly localized expertise and strategic organizational tenure (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Consequently, a purposive sampling technique was deployed to ensure that the selected respondents accurately reflect the structural hierarchy central to leadership research. This strategy aligns the data collection framework with the study's theoretical foundation by targeting a select cohort of individuals occupying high stakes, strategic roles within the four and five star hotels sector (Etikan et al., 2016). Drawing from established methodologies in parallel fields, this approach leverages the non redundant, expert perspectives of key informants to foster a comprehensive understanding of the nexus between leader traits dynamics and organizational performance (Campbell et al., 2020). To operationalize this design, three respondents representing distinct hierarchical echelons were purposively sampled from each of the 68 participating hotels, yielding a total sample size of 204 respondents (68 hotels×3 respondents), as detailed in Table 1. This multi-level sampling framework ensures that the causal relationships evaluated via regression analysis are informed by insights from every tier of the organizational hierarchy.

Table 1: Sample Size

Respondent Category	Number for study	Number of Hotels	Total Respondents
Top Management	1	68	68
Middle Management	1	68	68
Operational	1	68	68
Total	3		204

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and procedures

Structured questionnaires were circulated to the respondents in order to obtain quantitative data. As Saunders and Lewis (2016) stated, “the questionnaire is a comprehensive data collection tool, appropriate to collect objective data from a defined population. This was chosen as a method to achieve respondent anonymity which would result in higher response rates and more honesty and allow systematic comparability of standardized data sets. The researcher administered the questionnaires on the drop and pick or electronic methods using e mail for convenience to the respondents. There is one questionnaire for all respondents. To collect primary data from the research selected individuals, a questionnaire was employed. The questionnaire was split into five sections in order to gather respondents’ information regarding topics that were relevant to the study. Sections A and B contain socio demographic factors, Section C describes leader traits, Section D contains leadership style questions, Section E covers employee turnover, and Section F covers hotel performance questions.

3.6 Pilot

A pilot study was performed prior to the main study to provide preliminary information towards the research area (Mutz & Müller, 2016), validate the content and structure of the questionnaire (Kaur et al., 2017), and assess the reliability, validity, and efficacy of the measurement tool used by the study (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). In the pilot study, twenty one questionnaires was administered to 21 staff of 7 of the 68 hotels that make up the target population of the study (four and five star hotels in Kenya). The 7 hotels purposively selected were Pan Afric Hotel, Nairobi Safari Club, Panari Hotel, Ole Sereni, Sankara Nairobi, The Boma Nairobi and The Tribe. Pilot data were received from three senior, middle and operational representatives in each in the purposively selected seven selected four and five star hotels in Nairobi City in Kenya. The 21 pilot study respondents formed 10.3% of the total sample of 204 respondents.

3.6.1 Validity

The researcher performed the Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) test of sampling adequacy to confirm the construct validity of the variables under study. Using the KMO test allowed for appropriate analysis of the items. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was conducted to determine if the samples for each study were from populations with similar variances which indicates whether sampling was adequate. KMO test results indicated that all factors exceeded the threshold value (0.7), indicating that all the factors had met adequate sampling

adequacy criteria. As outlined by Williams et al. (2010), a KMO score of 0.50 or greater indicates an acceptable level of sampling adequacy, and higher values indicate greater adequacy. The result of Bartlett's test of Sphericity showed that the sample were obtained from populations with constant variances (p values $< .001$), confirming the adequacy of the sampling. Thus, the results of the constructs for both tests were considered acceptable level of study.

3.6.2 Reliability

Joppe (2000) defined reliability as the extent to which research findings exhibit consistency over time and represent an accurate representation of the population in question in the study. At its core, an instrument is considered to be reliable if its output can be replicated in other studies applying similar methods. This internal consistency is of utmost significance as consistent responses are the decisive factor of data quality (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). The Cronbach's Alpha(α) coefficient was empirically used to evaluate the internal consistency of research instruments in the present study. In accordance with the cutoff established by Nunnally (1978) a coefficient of .70 or higher was used as a measure of satisfactory reliability to the validity of the hypothetical constructs being measured.

3.7 Diagnostics Tests

To adhere to the foundational assumptions of the Classical Linear Regression Model (CLRM), this study utilized a comprehensive suite of pre and post estimation diagnostic tests (Saunders et al., 2019). The diagnostics tests of assessing normality, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and linearity ensuring adherence to fundamental parametric assumptions and guiding the adoption of robust alternative estimators when violations occurred. The methodology and implications of each test are detailed below.

3.8 Model for the Study

To test the study objective on relationship between leader traits and performance of four and five star rated hotels in Kenya, the study adopted the model equation 1 shown below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LT + \varepsilon \dots \dots \dots \text{Equation 1}$$

Where Y represents performance of four and five star rated hotels

β_0 represents the constant

β_1 represents the regression coefficient

LT represents the leader traits

ε represents the error term

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

This section provides information about the characteristics of the sampled hotels and the demographic details of the study respondents. The findings regarding gender, age, and tenure were found to be consistent with established empirical literature in the Kenyan hospitality context.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Demographic Profile		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18 - 25 years	8	11
	26 - 35 years	78	44.9
	36 - 45 years	53	30.5
	46 - 55 years	23	12.7
	Above 55 years	2	0.8
Length of Service	0 – 5 years	120	69.5
	6 - 10 years	33	18.6
	11 - 15 years	13	7.6
	Above 15 years	7	4.2
Level of Education	Certificate	24	14
	College Diploma	77	44
	Bachelor's Degree	72	41
	Master's Degree	1	1

The empirical results illustrate that over 70% of the workforce at Kenyan four and five star hotels is under the age of 46, “representing a significant share of the labor pool. This demographic profile closely aligns with recent sectoral trends documented in contemporary hospitality literature. The distribution of employee tenure, suggests that staff turnover or the percentage of new workforce is high as a large proportion of employees (69.5%, $n = 120$) reported working for their organization for five years or less. A further 18.6% ($n = 33$) had a tenure of 6 to 10 years, with 7.6% ($n = 13$) and 4.2% ($n = 7$) of those with 11 to 15 and over 15 years, respectively. The distribution of employee tenure, which suggests that staff turnover or the percentage of new workforce is high as a large proportion of employees (69.5%, $n = 120$) reported working for their organization for five years or less. A further 18.6% ($n = 33$) had a tenure of 6 to 10 years, with 7.6% ($n = 13$) and 4.2% ($n = 7$) of those with 11 to 15 and over 15 years, respectively.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

4.2.1. Leader traits and performance in four and five star rated hotels in Kenya

To examine the relationship between leader traits and performance in four and five star rated hotels in Kenya, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. The first null hypothesis was as follows.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between leader traits and performance in four and five star rated hotels in Kenya.

The statistical significance of the hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression which generated the regression coefficients; coefficient of determination (R^2), analysis of variance (ANOVA) and model coefficients. The test covered goodness of fit overall significance, individual significance and diagnostic test. Table 2 presents the model summary for leader traits.

Table 2: Model Summary for Leader Traits

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.470 ^a	.220	.216	.516	.220	48.640	1	172	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), leader traits.

The results from the model summary in Table 2 reveal a statistically significant relationship between leader traits and hotel performance of four and five star rated hotels in Kenya. The model summary in Table 2 shows a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.470 and an R Square (R^2) of 0.220, indicating that approximately 22% of the variance in hotel performance can be explained by these leader traits. This also highlights that 78.0% of the variance in hotel performance is influenced by other factors not included in this particular model. The adjusted R Square (R^2) of 0.216 confirms the model's robustness, and the F change statistic of 48.640 with a significance level of 0.000 demonstrates that this relationship is statistically significant and unlikely due to chance. This means that the combined influence of the Big Five personality dimensions of conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, openness, and neuroticism in hotel leaders plays a role in driving key performance outcomes such as attracting more customers, increasing profitability, and innovating through new product development. These traits shape how leaders think, behave, and interact with employees and customers, which in turn affects organizational effectiveness.

The significant explanatory power of these traits in the model underscores the importance of personality in leadership effectiveness within the hospitality sector. Leaders who score well on positive traits such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness are more likely to drive superior hotel performance, while managing or mitigating the effects of neuroticism is also crucial.

Table 3: ANOVA for Leader Traits

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	12.939	1	12.939	48.640	.000 ^b
Residual	45.754	172	.266		
Total	58.692	173			

a. *Dependent Variable: Hotel Performance*

b. *Predictors: (Constant), Leader traits.*

The ANOVA results in Table 3 provide a statistical test of the relationship between leader traits and hotel performance indicators such as customer growth, profitability, and new product development in four and five star hotels in Kenya. The model shows a sum of squares for regression of 12.939 with 1 degree of freedom, and a mean square of 12.939. The F statistics are 48.640 with a significance level (p value) of 0.000, which is well below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant; meaning that the leader traits collectively have a meaningful predictive effect on hotel performance. The residual sum of squares is 45.754 with 172 degrees of freedom, reflecting the variation in hotel performance not explained by the leader traits in the model. The total sum of squares is 58.692, representing the total variation in hotel performance. The significance of the F test confirms that the Big Five leader traits explain a significant portion of the variance in hotel performance outcomes, supporting the idea that personality characteristics of leaders are important determinants of organizational success in the hospitality sector.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients for Leader traits and Hotel Performance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	β			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	2.458	.281		8.747	.000	1.903	3.012
Leader traits	.453	.065	.470	6.974	.000	.325	.582

a. Dependent Variable: Hotel Performance

The regression coefficients in Table 4 provide detailed insights into the relationship between leader traits and hotel performance in four and five star hotels in Kenya. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for leader traits is 0.453, with a standard error of 0.065. This means that for every one unit increase in the leader traits score, hotel performance is expected to increase by 0.453 units, holding other factors constant. This positive coefficient indicates a direct and meaningful impact of leader traits on performance outcomes such as customer growth, profitability, and new product development.

The standardized coefficient (β) is 0.470, which aligns with the correlation coefficient reported earlier, confirming a moderate positive effect of leader traits on hotel performance. The t value of 6.974 and the associated p value of 0.000 indicate that the effect of leader traits on hotel performance is statistically significant. This means that there is evidence to reject the null hypothesis that leader traits have no effect on performance, confirming that the relationship observed is unlikely due to chance. The 95% confidence interval for the unstandardized coefficient ranges from 0.325 to 0.582, which does not include zero, further reinforcing the reliability of this positive relationship. This interval suggests that the true effect of leader traits on hotel performance lies within this range with 95% confidence. The constant term (intercept) is 2.458, which represents the expected hotel performance score when leader traits are zero. This intercept is also statistically significant ($t = 8.747$, $p = 0.000$), indicating a baseline level of performance independent of leader traits.

The fitted model was:

$$\text{Hotel Performance} = 2.458 + 0.453LT$$

These regression results support the conclusion that leader traits significantly and positively influence hotel performance in Kenya's four and five star rated hotel sector. Leaders who exhibit desirable personality characteristics such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, openness, and low neuroticism are likely to drive better customer growth, profitability, and development of new products.

4.2.2 Results discussions

The aim of this research was to assess the relationship between leader traits and performance in four and five star rated hotels in Kenya. A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between leader traits and hotel performance of four and five star rated hotels in Kenya. The results revealed a statistically significant relationship, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.470 and an R squared value of 0.220, indicating that leader traits explain about 22% of the variance in hotel performance. This suggests that while leader traits play a role in driving performance outcomes such as customer attraction, profitability, and development of new products, a majority of the variance (78%) is influenced by other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R squared of 0.216 confirms the model's robustness, and the F change statistic of 48.640 with a significance level of 0.000 demonstrates that the relationship is highly unlikely to be due to chance. These findings highlight the importance of the Big Five personality dimensions conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, openness, and neuroticism in shaping leadership effectiveness and organizational success in the hospitality sector. Further analysis of the regression coefficients showed that the unstandardized coefficient (B) for leader traits is 0.453, meaning that for every single unit increase in leader traits, hotel performance is expected to increase by 0.453 units, holding other factors constant. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.470 aligns with the correlation coefficient, confirming a moderate positive effect of leader traits on hotel performance. The t value of 6.974 and p value of 0.000 indicate that this effect is statistically significant, providing evidence against the null hypothesis which stated that leader traits have no impact on performance. The 95% confidence interval for the unstandardized coefficient ranges from 0.325 to 0.582, excluding zero and reinforcing the reliability of this positive relationship. Additionally, the intercept of 2.458, which is statistically significant, represents the baseline hotel performance when leader traits are zero, suggesting that other factors also contribute to performance. Overall, the analysis confirms that leader traits are a vital component of effective hotel management and significantly influence performance outcomes in Kenya's luxury hotel industry.

The current study results are in agreement with Karunathilake (2017) who evaluated the influence of leaders' attributes and conduct on staff performance in the Sri Lankan hotel business. The findings indicate a favourable correlation between the traits and behaviour of

leaders and employee performance. It is recommended that hotels adopt a participatory leadership style and include workers in decision making processes. The study's results led to many suggestions being made to the hotel management in Sri Lanka to enhance performance. Additionally, the current study results are in congruence with Gupta and Parimal (2020) who conducted a study on the relationship between personality dimensions and psychological well being among university students during the pandemic lockdown in India. The study's findings indicate a statistically significant connection between personality dimensions and psychological well being. Specifically, qualities such as Extraversion, Openness to Experience, and Neuroticism exhibit a negative correlate with psychological well being. However, the findings also revealed that the qualities of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness have a statistically significant and favourable correlation with psychological well being.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research conclusively demonstrates a statistically significant positive relationship between leader traits and hotel performance in Kenya's four and five star hotels. Leader traits explain about 22% of the variance in performance outcomes such as customer attraction, profitability, and innovation, highlighting their meaningful but partial influence. The robustness of the model and moderate statistical significance affirm the reliability of these findings. Specifically, the Big Five personality dimensions conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, openness, and neuroticism play an important role in shaping leadership effectiveness and organizational success in the hospitality sector. The positive regression coefficients indicate that improvements in leader traits are associated with measurable gains in hotel performance, although other factors also contribute to success, as reflected by the baseline performance level. Practically, these results suggest that hotel management should prioritize the development of key leader traits to enhance performance outcomes. Overall, the study confirms that leader traits are a vital component of effective hotel management and significantly contribute to the success of Kenya's four and five star rated hotels.

To further optimize leadership effectiveness and foster an even more robust workplace culture in Kenya's four and five star hotels, it's recommended that hotel management implements targeted leadership development programs focusing on enhancing supervisors' empathy and openness to new ideas. While current supervisors are commendably strong in

approachability, composure, and organizational skills, the descriptive statistics highlighted that empathy and willingness to experiment with new ideas are areas needing attention. Developing these traits is crucial because empathy is foundational for building deeper trust, fostering psychological safety, and addressing employee concerns effectively, which can significantly reduce potential conflict and improve team cohesion. Similarly, increased openness to new ideas will empower supervisors to encourage innovation, adapt to evolving industry trends, and embrace creative problem solving, all vital for maintaining a competitive edge in the dynamic hospitality sector. Investing in training that specifically cultivates these critical, yet currently less developed, emotional intelligence and collaborative leadership aspects will allow supervisors to build stronger relationships with their teams, drive continuous improvement, and ultimately bolster overall hotel performance.

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