

## Efficacy of Emphasizing Ethical Practices on Organizational Effectiveness within Private Universities in Kenya

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### Abstract

#### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of emphasizing ethical practices on organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya. The study was underpinned by strategic leadership theory and adopted positivism philosophy. The design was quantitative cross-sectional survey research. A sample of 325 was drawn from 1733 top management teams of all 36 private universities. Data was collected using a structured 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 29) software. Pseudo R-square Nagelkerke  $R^2=0.544$  indicated that ethical practices explained 54% of variance in organizational effectiveness. Parameter estimates ( $\beta=2.815$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) showed that emphasizing ethical practices has a significant impact on organizational effectiveness. The study concluded that emphasizing ethical practices has significant impact on organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya. It is recommended that strategic leaders in private universities strengthen their ethical frameworks through acceleration of codified ethics, a value-based culture, and ethics training. Leaders should increase investment in ethics training and strategically match emerging benefits to organizational effectiveness goals.

**Key words:** emphasizing ethical practices, organizational effectiveness, private universities, strategic leadership

#### Introduction

In recent times, strategic leadership has piqued the interest of individuals and organizations across industries due to environmental turbulence (Al Haddad & Al Shobaki, 2021). The COVID-19 crisis has also accelerated emphasis on the role and importance of strategic leadership in helping organizations to remain financially and operationally sustainable (Belias & Trihas, 2022). In social sciences research it is also gaining prominence (Singh, Lim, Jha, Kumar, & Ciasullo, 2023). Strategic leadership is critical for effective and efficient deployment

of resources and enabling and directing learning, strategic thinking, and change in an organization so that it is effectively equipped to confront challenges and adapt in changing business environments (Tipurić, 2022). Effective strategic leadership practices include determining strategic direction, effective management of firm resource portfolio, sustaining effective organizational culture, establishing balanced organizational controls, and emphasizing ethical practices (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2017).

Jonyo, Ouma, and Mosoti (2020) established that ethical practices underpinned by strategic leadership and anchored on a strong organizational culture have an impact on the success of private universities in Kenya. A leader's integrity and moral tenets are the schemes on which organizational culture and strategic thinking are built (Grigoropoulos, 2019). Therefore, embedding ethics in organizational operations becomes a foundation for realizing short- and long-term objectives. Implementation of strategies based on ethical processes increases the organization's effectiveness as employees act appropriately as they are guided by the organization's ethos.

Organizational effectiveness is an important variable because it indicates how healthy an organization is wholistically (Xu, Zhao, Fang, Wang, Wang, Zeng, & Wang, 2022). It refers to the ability of an organization to achieve all its goals and objectives (Bako & Olabimtan, 2020). According to Hassan (2021), organizational effectiveness goes beyond internal stakeholders and the efficiencies that drive positive performance to include external factors that have an impact on how the organization measures beyond its economic value. For a long time though, its measurement has been based on financial performance, which despite its significance does not by itself provide a holistic view of how effectively and sustainably an organization is operating (Hitt, 1988). Further, environmental turbulence and ongoing change have made financial planning and projection difficult such that achieving set financial performance targets cannot be ascertained (Islam, Said, Sumardi, & Rahman, 2020). Thus, to have a true picture of how an organization is measuring relative to its goals, quantitative and qualitative aspects of performance and other competing organizational demands must be evaluated (Pounder, 1999). Avedi and Anyieni (2023) argued that organizational effectiveness is essential for the survival of private universities, particularly those in Kenya, as they operate in an intensely competitive environment.

Private universities in Kenya have grown significantly, having emerged and accelerated in the 1990s (Kibuine, Wainaina, & Muranga, 2022). Currently there are 36 private universities but despite this growth, these institutions are seen as hubs of poor performance producing low quality graduates unable to match market demands (Yegon, 2020). Low qualifications and high attrition among faculty, high student-to-faculty ratios, and low research capacity are some of the issues contributing to compromised quality (Wekullo, Shiundu, Ouda, & Mutevane, 2022). According to Katundano (2019) private universities in East Africa are in urgent need of restoration of ethical practices by university leadership and stakeholders to achieve academic excellence, quality assurance, staff retention, and student attraction. When ethical leadership permeates all university functions, a range of values emerges amongst stakeholders which translates to various positive outcomes for the university. A values-led university establishes a moral compass that guides all internal stakeholders in making decisions and determining a standard by which actions are evaluated. Mechanisms such as code of ethics, value-based culture, and ethics training are effective channels for defining and clarifying complex issues by outlining frameworks for obligation and minimum university standards for stakeholders (Baban, 2021). Effective involvement of stakeholders to build a mutually supportive bond that draws everyone to a collective interest in the institution's goals and objectives contributes to achieving effectiveness in private universities (Shi & Kim, 2021).

### ***Statement of the problem***

According to Al Haddad and Al Shobaki (2021) private universities that adopt effective strategic leadership practices can realize their corporate objectives, thereby achieving effectiveness. This assertion, however, conflicts with reality across geographies as private universities are seen as ineffective due to weak leadership practices (Rubera, 2023). In Indian private universities malpractices and poor quality are widespread as leaders advance commercial gain in place of quality educational outcomes (Qamar, 2021). In Nigerian private universities malpractices and quality issues are rampant (James & Botimi-Slaboh, 2019). In Kenya Inoorero and Kenco Universities were closed due to internal challenges and noncompliance with CUE accreditation requirements while Landmark International College's 175 awarded degrees were nullified on grounds of illegality (King'oo, Kimencu, & Kinyua, 2020).

Studies show that strategic leadership has been adopted in Kenyan private universities but has not been practiced effectively. There is concern that leaders are not appropriately trained or orientated to the work of strategic leadership (Mulwa, Mathenge, & Kiboi, 2019). On the other hand, research on leadership in private universities is diverse but focus has been on performance and other variables, with scanty literature relating to effective strategic leadership practices and effectiveness constructs. These illustrations indicate significant gaps in practice and in literature in relation to effective strategic leadership practices and organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya. Further, the prevailing and seemingly unending narrative of environmental turbulence, ongoing change, and survival in the context of private universities warrants evaluation of strategic leadership practices and effectiveness in these institutions. This study, therefore, sought to investigate the impact of emphasizing ethical practices on organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya.

### ***Hypothesis***

The null hypothesis was stated as follows:

H<sub>0</sub>: Emphasizing ethical practices does not have a significant impact on organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya.

### ***Strategic leadership theory***

Strategic leadership theory postulates that leadership efforts and strategic decisions translate to organizational success. Strategic leadership is defined by qualities of integrity, honesty, and trust which are the basis on which decision-making in organizations is undertaken. Strategic leaders' emphasis on ethical practices accelerates embedding of prescriptive values guiding individual behavior and corporate action (Ireland & Hitt, 2005; Slawinski, 2007). Ethical practices enable enhanced effectiveness of the specific processes by which strategy is implemented (Hitt et al. 2017). Strategic leadership is, therefore, central to establishment of ethical practices so that ethical decision-making becomes the character on which organizational activity hinges (Gore & Kanyangale, 2022).

### ***Organizational effectiveness theory***

Organizational ecology theory propounded by Hannan and Freeman (1977) is considered the seminal theoretical foundation of organizational effectiveness. An intricate phenomenon, organizational effectiveness varies from one organization to another and has no single criterion for its measurement (Albassami, Naveed, Sabir, & Bin Jantan, 2019). This speaks to the variation in criteria as well as the value and preference placed on the different schools of thought including organizational adaption, goals, resources, stakeholder/multiple constituency, and competing values approaches (Dhoopar, Sihag, & Gupta, 2023). These variations of models and concepts make effectiveness an ideal variable to study in the context of higher education institutions as measurement can be done using multiple qualitative and quantitative dimensions to effectively establish the health of universities.

In 1981 Quinn and Rohrbaugh proposed the Competing Values Framework for measuring organizational effectiveness. The model recognized organizations as coalitional and dynamic with emphasis on changing internal and external dynamics as well as differing criteria over time and across coalitions. By combining this model with the organizational life cycle approach, it reveals the dynamic characteristic of effectiveness through linking the organization's lifecycle phases with the different measurement criteria. This model, which comprises human relations, open system, internal process, and rational goal, enables leaders to continuously balance competing demands (O'Neill, De Vries, & Comiskey, 2021).

### ***Empirical review***

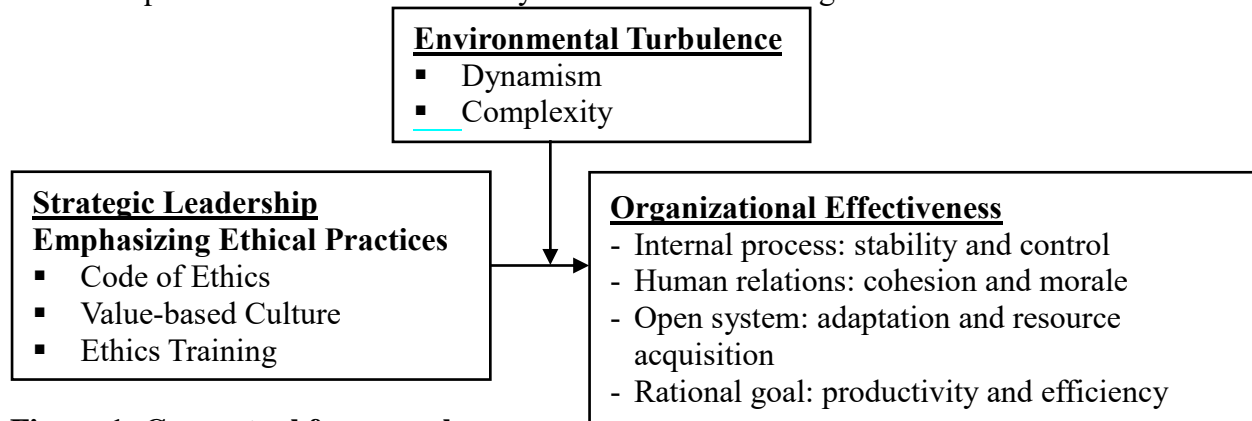
Ahmed, Pahi, Nadeem, Soomro, Parmar, Nasir, and Ahmed (2023) found that in the information technology industry in South Asia business ethics positively influence organizational performance - technological change determines the strength or weakness of performance. While implementing technological change, leaders should institute appropriate measures to ensure that the continuing practice of ethics is not compromised. Qasim, Rizbi, and Irshad (2020) found that ethical leadership impacts task performance and organizational citizenship behavior. When a leader consistently practices ethics, that behavior is reinforced by reiteration and shapes into a norm. In such an environment, efficiency and productivity thrive as action is appropriated by the codified ethics. Yatich and Musebe (2017) in their assessment of the impact of ethical behavior on performance at Baringo District Hospital uncovered a web of unethical practices for which they recommended staff training and implementation of the Public Officer Ethics Act of 2003 to serve as codified ethics to guide employee behavior in the public health sector in Kenya.

Gorkana, Mendon, Hawaldar, Spulbar, Birau, Nayak, and Manohar (2022) found that in private engineering colleges in the Karnataka state, India institutional effectiveness is highly influenced by academic leadership and campus culture, and campus culture and faculty involvement in decision making partially mediate institutional effectiveness and academic leadership. Zvavahera, Chigora, and Kembo (2021) found that in multicultural universities gaps in management's professional character ethic create mistrust with academic staff. Higher education institutions' leadership must be deliberate about addressing issues of ethics amongst employees because it determines the relationships that emerge. Diversity and inclusion, particularly in the context of internationalization, is critical in cultivating positive ethics and improving employee relations in universities. Internationalization of higher education enables universities to pursue goals such as diversification of both income and human resource capacity which are critical for supporting the university's objectives through service quality improvement (Nyongesa, Mbugua, & Boit, 2022). Attracting international students and faculty also enhances collaborations and partnerships which contribute resources and skills universities can utilize to enhance performance and respond to evolving changes in the global education landscape (Sharipov, 2020).

Caldwell, Ortiz, Fluegge, and Brummett (2020) investigated the degree to which ethics training programs affected employees' moral judgement in two US universities in the mid- and north-west regions. The authors found that ethics training augmented by behavior modeling and role play as well as full course and experiential learning positively correlated with moral judgement. It is imperative that organizational leaders effectively design and invest in detailed training programs for impactful outcomes. Benlahcene, Saoula, Jaganathan, Ramdani, and AlQersh (2022) found that lack of or limited ethics education and ineffective training programs negatively impact leadership behavior. Unethical leadership behavior compromises ethical decision-making which results in organizational outcomes that conflict with anticipated goals and objectives. Explicit institutionalization of ethics through training positively influences organizational citizenship behavior which supports achievement of organizational objectives (Sandakila & Satrya, 2020).

### Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study was as indicated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

### Methodology

The study was underpinned by strategic leadership theory and adopted positivism philosophy. The design was quantitative research using a cross-sectional survey. The target population was 1733 management team members from 36 private universities in Kenya. A sample of 325 strategic leadership members comprising trustees/directors, university council, university management board, senate/academic board/academic council, senior academic and administrative leaders, and student leaders was drawn. Probability sampling with stratification was used. 32 individuals (10%) participated in the pilot study; therefore, the main study had 293 respondents. Data was collected using a structured 5-point Likert scale questionnaire which was self-administered and shared online through a google form. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 29.

### Results

Of the 293 questionnaires distributed 273 responded, representing a response rate of 93%.

### Inferential statistics for emphasizing ethical practices and organizational effectiveness

#### Factor analysis

KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.928 indicating that sampling was adequate for the study variable, and there was sufficient shared variance in the data to allow factor analysis to be undertaken. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ( $\chi^2=3163.531$ ,  $df=66$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) indicating significant correlation between variables, therefore, supporting factor extraction. The significant test results indicated that the variables were interrelated thus justifying use of principal component analysis. These findings validated the structure of ethical practices as a measurable factor thus the study could accurately assess the impact of ethical practices on organizational effectiveness. Table 1 shows the results.

**Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity results**

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.928
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3163.531
	df	66
	Sig.	.000

### Total Variance Explained

One factor was identified with a variance of 70.113%, indicating that a significant portion of the data's variability was captured by a single dominant factor which suggested a strong underlying structure. Thus, ethical practices is a well-defined construct which reinforces its



importance in strategic leadership and organizational effectiveness. This supported the study's validity in assessing the impact of ethical practices on organizational effectiveness. Table 2 shows the results.

**Table 2: Total variance explained results**

Component	Total Variance Explained			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.414	70.113	70.113	8.414	70.113	70.113
2	.653	5.439	75.552			
3	.617	5.143	80.696			
4	.484	4.032	84.728			
5	.460	3.831	88.559			
6	.305	2.545	91.104			
7	.238	1.979	93.083			
8	.217	1.812	94.895			
9	.194	1.614	96.508			
10	.172	1.434	97.942			
11	.151	1.255	99.197			
12	.096	.803	100.000			

**Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.**

*Pattern Matrix*

All items loaded strongly onto a single component, suggesting that ethical practices is a unidimensional construct meaning all measured aspects contribute to a single underlying factor. The strong factor loadings indicated a well-defined structure and confirmed that emphasizing ethical practices is a key determinant of organizational success. This supported its validity in assessing organizational effectiveness in private universities. Table 3 shows the results.

**Table 3: Pattern matrix results**

Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>		Component
		1
The strategic leadership team utilizes the code of ethics to enhance cohesion and morale		.861
The strategic leadership team utilizes the code of ethics to enhance stability and control		.852
The strategic leadership team invests in ethics training to enhance productivity and efficiency		.847
The strategic leadership team promotes a value-based culture to enhance adaptation and resource acquisition		.846
The strategic leadership team invests in ethics training to enhance cohesion and morale		.846
The strategic leadership team invests in ethics training to enhance adaptation and resource acquisition		.844
The strategic leadership team utilizes the code of ethics to enhance adaptation and resource acquisition		.839
The strategic leadership team invests in ethics training to enhance stability and control		.837
The strategic leadership team utilizes the code of ethics to enhance productivity and efficiency		.833
The strategic leadership team promotes a value-based culture to enhance productivity and efficiency		.824

The strategic leadership team promotes a value-based culture to enhance cohesion and morale	<b>.814</b>
The strategic leadership team promotes a value-based culture to enhance stability and control	<b>.804</b>

**Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.**

**a. 1 components extracted.**

*Pearson Product Moment correlation*

Results ( $r=0.686$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) indicated that ethical practices and organizational effectiveness were positively and strongly correlated, thus supporting it as a key driver of organizational effectiveness, and underscoring strategic leadership's role in embedding ethical practices in organizational operations for better outcomes. Table 4 shows the results.

**Table 4: Pearson Product Moment correlation results**

Correlations				
			Organizational Effectiveness	Ethical Practices
Spearman's rho	Organizational Effectiveness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	<b>.686**</b>
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<b>.000</b>
		N	268	<b>267</b>
	Ethical Practices	Correlation Coefficient	.686**	<b>1.000</b>
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	267	<b>270</b>
<b>**.</b> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

*Chi-square test of independence*

Results ( $\chi^2=212.929$ ,  $df=12$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) indicated a statistically significant association between ethical practices and organizational effectiveness. Likelihood ratio test and linear-by-linear association tests were also significant, reinforcing this relationship. However, 12 cells (60%) had expected counts less than 5, which may have impacted the reliability of the test. Despite this limitation, the strong significance level results provided strong statistical evidence that ethical practices contribute to achieving organizational effectiveness. Table 5 shows the results.

**Table 5: Chi-Square test results**

Chi-Square Tests				Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
	Value	df		
Pearson Chi-Square	212.929 <sup>a</sup>	12		<b>.000</b>
Likelihood Ratio	174.949	12		<b>.000</b>
Linear-by-Linear Association	131.230	1		<b>.000</b>
N of Valid Cases	267			
<b>a. 12 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .04.</b>				

*Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)*

Normality test results indicated that both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were significant ( $p<0.001$ ) suggesting that data did not follow a normal distribution. Deviation from normality implied that non-parametric methods or transformations would be necessary for further statistical analysis. However, as this study employed ordinal logistic regression, inferential testing relied on proportional odds assumption which ensured that conclusions drawn from regression analysis remained valid. Table 6 shows the results.

**Table 6: Normality test results**

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Ethical Practices	.267	270	.000	.778	270	.000
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

One-Way ANOVA results ( $F=85.941$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) showed a significant difference in organizational effectiveness based on ethical practices groups. However, between-group variance ( $SS = 66.271$ ) was slightly smaller than within-group variance ( $SS = 67.602$ ) suggesting that differences in organizational effectiveness may not be very strongly attributed to ethical practices alone, there is potential influence of other internal or contextual factors. These results underscore the need for strategic leadership to reevaluate individual institutions' ethical frameworks to determine enablers and complementing factors to create a solid ethical environment for greater organizational effectiveness. Table 7 shows the results.

**Table 7: One-Way ANOVA results**

ANOVA					
Organizational Effectiveness					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	66.271	3	22.090	85.941	.000
Within Groups	67.602	263	.257		
Total	133.873	266			

#### *Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis*

Autocorrelation assumption test Durbin-Watson output was 1.834 which fell within the benchmark of 1.5 and 2.5, indicating no severe autocorrelation in the data. This finding suggested that residuals in the regression model were not correlated, therefore, the autocorrelation assumption was met. Table 8 shows the results.

**Table 8: Autocorrelation results**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.702 <sup>a</sup>	.493	.491	.50592	1.834

**a. Predictors: (Constant), Ethical Practices**

**b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Effectiveness**

Proportional odds assumption test for parallel line result was not significant ( $\chi^2=15.029$ ,  $df=9$ ,  $p=0.090$ ), indicating that the relationship between ethical practices and organizational effectiveness remained consistent across response categories. Since the assumption was met, the stability of the predictor variable's influence was confirmed, and ordinal logistic regression model was used confidently to analyze impact of ethical practices on organizational effectiveness. Table 9 shows the results.



**Table 9: Proportional odds assumption results**

Test of Parallel Lines <sup>a</sup>				
Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	105.368			
General	90.339 <sup>b</sup>	15.029 <sup>c</sup>	9	<b>.090</b>

The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.

a. Link function: Logit.

b. The log-likelihood value cannot be further increased after maximum number of step-halving.

c. The Chi-Square statistic is computed based on the log-likelihood value of the last iteration of the general model. Validity of the test is uncertain.

Multicollinearity test results showed that tolerance value was 1.000 and variance inflation factor (VIF) value was 1.000, indicating no multicollinearity between ethical practices and organizational effectiveness. Thus, the predictor variable was independent and did not cause redundancy in the regression model. As multicollinearity assumption was met, regression analysis proceeded on the basis that ethical practices is a distinct and valid predictor of organizational effectiveness. Table 10 shows the results.

**Table 10: Multicollinearity results**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>							
	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
		B	Std. Error				
1	(Constant)	1.178	.190		6.192	.000	
	Ethical_Practices2	.701	.044	.702	16.064	.000	1.000

**a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Effectiveness Ethical Practices2**

#### Hypothesis testing

Ordinal logistic regression model fitting information result was significant ( $\chi^2=169.766$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), indicating that emphasizing ethical practices had a strong impact on organizational effectiveness. The final model (-2 Log Likelihood = 32.037) showed a substantial improvement over the intercept-only model. These findings confirm that emphasizing ethical practices significantly predicts organizational effectiveness in private universities. The strong significance level ( $p<0.001$ ) further validated the strength of this relationship and underscored the importance of strategic leadership in leading the adoption and entrenchment of ethical practices to support organizational goals. Table 11 shows the results.

**Table 11: Model fit summary results**

Model Fitting Information				
Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	201.803			
Final	32.037	169.766	1	<b>.000</b>

**Link function: Logit.**

Goodness-of-fit Pearson Chi-square ( $\chi^2=25$ ,  $p=0.952$ ) and Deviance ( $\chi^2=5.183$ ,  $p=0.922$ ) statistics were not significant, suggesting that the model fit the data well. This indicates that the logistic regression model appropriately explained the ethical practices and organizational effectiveness relationship. Since both tests showed good fit, the model's assumptions were satisfied, ensuring reliability of conclusions drawn from the regression analysis. This further

strengthened the case for ethical practices as one of the key determinants of organizational effectiveness in private universities. Table 12 shows the results.

**Table 12: Goodness-of-fit summary results**

Goodness-of-Fit			
	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	4.525	11	<b>.952</b>
Deviance	5.183	11	<b>.922</b>
<b>Link function: Logit.</b>			

Pseudo R-square values indicated that ethical practices explained a significant proportion of the variance in organizational effectiveness. Nagelkerke  $R^2$  was 0.544, indicating that 54% of variability in organizational effectiveness was accounted for by emphasizing ethical practices and 46% by other factors not included in the study. Table 13 shows the results.

**Table 13: Pseudo R-square results**

Pseudo R-Square	
Cox and Snell	<b>.471</b>
Nagelkerke	<b>.544</b>
McFadden	<b>.317</b>
<b>Link function: Logit.</b>	

Parameter estimates showed that ethical practices had a significant positive effect on organizational effectiveness. The coefficient for ethical practices was 2.815 ( $p<0.001$ ), indicating that as ethical practices improve, organizational effectiveness increases significantly. The confidence interval for emphasizing ethical practices (2.311 to 3.319) further confirmed the reliability of this effect. These findings highlight the importance of strategic leaders emphasizing ethical practices to enhance effectiveness in private universities. Table 14 shows the results.

**Table 14: Parameter estimates results**

		Parameter Estimates					95% Confidence Interval	
		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold	[Organizational Effectiveness=1.00]	4.677	1.027	20.750	1	.000	2.665	<b>6.689</b>
	[Organizational Effectiveness=2.00]	5.834	.921	40.132	1	.000	4.029	<b>7.639</b>
	[Organizational Effectiveness Ethical=3.00]	8.838	.973	82.497	1	.000	6.931	<b>10.746</b>
	[Organizational Effectiveness=4.00]	13.400	1.210	122.714	1	.000	11.029	<b>15.771</b>
Location	Ethical Practices	2.815	.257	119.748	1	.000	2.311	<b>3.319</b>
<b>Link function: Logit.</b>								

## Discussion

Pearson Product Moment Correlation results revealed a strong positive correlation between ethical practices and organizational effectiveness. These findings corroborate those of Bonaparte and Gathiru (2024) who found a significant positive correlation between ethical practices and organizational performance. Salil, Musau, and Kurere (2024) determined that transparency was positively correlated with performance at Kenya Medical Supplies Authority.

Mutea, Kibera, Kinoti, and Njeru (2024) established that fair trade practices correlate strongly with performance in Kenyan tea organizations.

Chi-square test results showed a significant association between ethical practices and organizational effectiveness. These findings are in line with Gaitho, Ogutu, Awino and Kitiabi (2019) who found significant association between strategic leadership and ethical practices and performance in Kenya's county governments. Ethical behavior as an attribute of organizational leadership translates to quality organizational outputs. Wanja, Kubaison, and Thurani (2023) found that ethical practices have a positive and significant association with human resource performance. Improvement in human resource performance yields better performance returns; therefore, promoting ethical values and tenets leads to positive organizational outcomes.

One-Way ANOVA results indicated that different ethical practices impact organizational effectiveness in private universities. Korir, Ouma and Okech (2024) found that in Kenyan Climate Smart agricultural sector, ethical practices had a significant positive relationship with solar PV adoption. Anyamene and Okeke (2023) found that work-life ethic has a positive effect on organizational performance. Existence of a strong value system augmented by a code of ethics and other approaches enforces a range of ethical tenets within the organization, thereby strengthening the ethical framework which supports achievement of organizational objectives.

Ordinal logistic regression model fitting information results indicated that ethical practices had a strong effect on organizational effectiveness. Goodness-of-fit test Pearson and Deviance indicated that the model appropriately explained the relationship between ethical practices and organizational effectiveness. Nagelkerke value indicated that ethical practices explained most of the variance in organizational effectiveness. Parameter estimates showed that ethical practices had a significant positive effect on organizational effectiveness. These findings align with Adeoye (2021) who found that ethical leadership strongly impacts organizational effectiveness within university settings. Kibugi, Muthoni, and Omariba (2023) found that ethical practices significantly impacted performance in Muranga County government.

### ***Conclusion and recommendations***

The study determined that emphasizing ethical practices by strategic leadership has significant impact on organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya. Based on this finding the null hypothesis was rejected. It is recommended that strategic leaders in private universities continues to strengthen their ethical frameworks through acceleration of a value-based culture, codified ethics, and training. Specifically, strategic leaders should increase investment in ethics training and strategically match emerging benefits to organizational effectiveness goals especially improving productivity and efficiency. It is suggested that a similar study be carried out on private universities' employees to identify convergences and/or deviations in outcomes, which will aid in generating a holistic view of the practice of strategic leadership in Kenya's private universities and enable consolidation of implications for practice and theory within the leadership discourse.

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