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## INCREMENTAL PREDICTIVE EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP, DIGITALISATION, AND EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT ON SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF STATE CORPORATIONS IN KENYA

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### Abstract

Empirical studies investigating the incremental predictive effects of strategic leadership and other contingent factors on the sustainable performance of public sector organisations in developing countries, are not only limited but at times also yield inconsistent set of findings. Consequently, this study had two objectives. First, to address some of the literature and knowledge gaps associated with the above research stream. Second, was to explore the incremental predictive influences of strategic leadership, external environmental, and digitalisation on the sustainable organisational performance, by conducting a descriptive cross sectional survey targeting 250 state owned corporations in Kenya. According to the study findings the three predictor variables have a significant incremental predictive effect on sustainable organisational performance of these entities. These finding make important contributions across three important levels. First, is to the body of knowledge through testing the predictions of the theories underpinning conceptualisation of this study. Second, the findings have policy implications. Governments in developing countries can rely on empirical evidence arising from this study to inform policies geared towards strengthening the frameworks for managing strategic leadership, digitalisation, environmental contingencies, and sustainable performance within state owned enterprises. Finally, the study contributes to management practice by providing useful insights to practitioners regarding manifestations of the four constructs and their linkages in the context of public sector organisations. Two notable limitations, was that current research relied on a descriptive cross sectional survey design and only targeted state owned enterprises. Future studies can consider using a longitudinal design to determine how the effects size compare under other different contextual settings.

**Keywords:** strategic leadership, digitalisation, external environment, incremental predictive power, sustainable organisational performance, state owned corporations.

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## Introduction

The debate on whether strategic leadership influences organisational outcomes and the role played by contingent factors is a topic which scholars and management practitioners have grappled with for a long time and which persists to the present time (House & Aditya, 1997; Fernandes et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2023). The *a priori* assumption is that the upper echelons of the organisational hierarchy, influence organisational performance by virtue of their strategic decisions and choices (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000; Finkelstein et al., 2009). However, empirical evidence at times yields inconsistent set of study findings regarding the significance of these effects. For instance, while some results concluded significantly positive effects, in contrast others have shown inconclusive or indicated non-significant leadership effects (Fitza, 2014; Shimao et al., 2024). Consequently, it has been argued that variations in organisational output may be predicated upon other contingencies or even random effects rather than predominantly on leadership effects (Fitza, 2017; Jaleha & Machuki, 2018; Johns, 2024). This study considers how two contingent factors, namely the external environment, and the digitalisation phenomenon combine with strategic leadership to incrementally predict sustainable organisation performance.

Organisations are open systems which continually interact with their external operating environments. Currently, organisations are increasingly operating in external environments which are hostile, turbulent, ambiguous, highly competitive and prone to frequent changes in customer needs and expectations (Ansoff et al., 2018; Srikanth & Ungureanu, 2025). This presents a challenge since the effectiveness and sustainability of organisations is largely

dependent on the ability of these entities to either align with or adopt to their external operating environment (Betton & Dess, 1985). The implication is that when organisations are out of balance with the external environment they face constraints and challenges which may adversely impact on their effectiveness. It has been posited that leadership is sensitive to the environmental contexts in which it takes place (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). Consequently, the external operating environment is an important contingent factor that not only has the potential to influence strategic leadership and organisational performance independently but can also have an impact on strategic leadership effects on different facets of organisational output. Despite this seemingly important role some leadership empirical studies at times fail to conceptualise and test for external environmental influences.

Further, the digitalisation phenomenon occasioned by rapid technological innovations in the technological environment is not only fundamentally redefining strategic leadership but also organisational behaviour. The modern business ecosystem is increasingly becoming technology driven. Therefore, digitalisation is considered the new competitive advantage for organisations (Kemp, 2024). It is therefore not surprising that a number of scholars contend that the adoption and deployment of digitalisation positively impacts organisational efficiency and effectiveness (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Despite the advancements in technological innovations for businesses in the last decade, the digitalisation phenomenon is still not properly integrated anchored in leadership empirical studies under-researched in leadership studies on not well integrated in leadership studies thus obfuscating the magnitude of its impact on organisational output.

Kenya which is a developing country has approximately 250 government owned State Corporations (SCs). These organisations play a critical role in the socio-economic development agenda of the country (GoK, 2023; 2013). The government of Kenya (GoK) has implemented various reforms based on New Public Management policies aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of SCs (Gunn, 2009). Key among these reforms include strengthening the performance management framework of SCs through performance contracting, enhancing the strategic leadership and corporate governance frameworks, improving the capacity of SCs to environmental contingencies, transitioning service delivery to the digital e-Government platform. In spite of these reforms, some of these entities continue to post mixed performance results. Some of these reforms resonate with the constructs being considered in this study. Consequently, the objectives of this research was to establish the impact of strategic leadership, the external environment, and the digitalisation phenomenon in incrementally predicting organisational effectiveness of SCs in Kenya.

### **Empirical Review**

This section reviews available empirical literature relating to the topic under investigation for purposes of determining areas of convergence or divergence in the body of knowledge. The preponderance of literature highlighted several research gaps which are expounded in the subsections below. The gaps discussed herein informed the conceptualisation of the study.

### ***Strategic leadership and Organisational performance***

Many empirical studies have been operationalised based on this research stream.

Results of pioneering studies indicated that although leadership positively influenced organisational performance the significance of these effects varied across studies due to the impact of other factors (Lieberson & O'Connor, 1972; Weiner & Mahoney, 1981; Mackey, 2008). Earlier studies mostly involved longitudinal research designs targeting large manufacturing and retail firms in developed countries. Further, a majority of these studies adopted variance decomposition analysis to determine leadership effects. Scholars have criticised this technique for having methodological challenges in particular with its inability to deal with nested firm and industry effects when studying leadership (Ketokivi & Guide 2017; Quigely & Graffin 2017; Wulff et al., 2023).

A number of studies operationalised in the last decade support the findings of above these earlier studies. Crossland and Hambrick (2011) contended that the ability of CEOs to influence performance of the organisations they lead, is largely predicated upon various institutional factors which determine their level of managerial discretion. Hambrick and Quigley (2014) concluded that CEOs effects on organisational performance are significantly positive. Quigley and Graffin, (2017) in a replicative study to that conducted by Fitza, (2014), observed that CEO's influence on organisational performance still remained positive and significant despite random chance and other competing effects. These last two studies were not only anchored on the upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) but were also operationalised in the context of large listed private sector firms in the USA. Additionally, the studies adopted similar operationalisations of strategic leadership and organisational performance constructs. For

instance, both studies measured organisational performance based only on financial indicators. However, the studies varied in terms of methodological approach. Whereas Hambrick and Quigley (2014) analysed data using variance partitioning analysis, Quigley and Graffin, (2017) relied on multi-level modelling. It has been argued that both techniques lack statistical robustness when it comes to addressing autocorrelation effects and potential endogeneity in the data thus limiting their predictive validity.

More recently, other empirical studies operationalised in the context of private sector observed that effective strategic leadership characteristics significantly positively influenced sustainable organisational performance (Venugopal et al., 2023; Dong et al., 2025; Kitur et al., 2025). Notably most of these empirical investigations vary in terms of operationalisation, conceptualisation, research design and, methodological approaches. Additionally, it was observed that a vast majority of strategic leadership studies have been operationalised on the context of developed countries mainly in the US and Europe targeting large listed firms in the private sector.

In contrast the number of studies operationalised to investigate leadership effects within public sector organisations are comparatively fewer. Elkomy et al. (2023) investigated the influence of strategic leadership on the effectiveness of National Health Service (NHS) in the UK. They operationalised the leadership construct using four styles of leadership namely, task, relationship, change, and integrity orientations respectively. Organisational performance was specified using four qualitative indicators. The study was based on a longitudinal research design and the qualitative data collected

analysed non-parametrically based on data envelopment analysis technique. The results indicated that strategic leadership whether at the individual (i.e., CEO) or corporate governance (i.e., BoDs) levels, significantly positively influenced the quality of organisational performance.

More importantly, how strategic leadership dispositional features influences sustainable organisational performance of public sector organisations in developing countries still remains under researched. The limited empirical studies conducted often vary in terms of theoretical anchorage, operationalisations, conceptualisations and methodological approaches. For instance, Mkalama and Machuki (2020) in a study anchored on the upper echelons theory examined the influence of TMT demographic characteristics on the performance of SCs in Kenya. The study used a cross sectional survey design and quantitative data collected processed using regression analysis. They observed that strategic leadership significantly positively influenced organisational output. As can be observed the study did not incorporate continent factors in its operationalisation thus rendering it susceptible to omitted variable bias.

Ojogiwa (2021) investigated the impact of top leadership on performance of public entities in Nigeria. The leadership construct was operationalised based on five reflective indicators associated with the top leadership's functional roles and responsibilities. Qualitative data collected during the study was processed using content analysis which lead to the development of thematic associations between the study variables. According to the findings effective leadership significantly positively influenced performance of the PEs. These results support the rationale for implementing

NPM policies within the public sector underpinned by effective leadership (Elcock, 2000; Dunleavy et al., 2006).

Nuwagaba (2022) conducted a cross sectional survey to explore the impact of strategic leadership on the organisational effectiveness of public owned enterprises in Uganda. The strategic leadership construct was operationalised using demographic, psychological and behavioural characteristics linked to the TMT. Additionally, organisational performance was specified using a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators. Hayes process macros model 4 was used for data analysis. According to the findings TMT characteristics significantly positively influenced organisational effectiveness. Further, a micro analysis of the three indicators used to operationalise strategic leadership indicated that demographic, psychological and behavioural characteristics also positively and significantly influenced organisational performance.

In spite of the above findings which indicated positive and significant influences of strategic leadership on organisational effectiveness a number of empirical studies have obtained results which are inconclusive or statistically insignificant (Fitza 2014; Awino & Bwire, 2018; Shima, 2025). Review of literature indicates that these inconsistent set of findings may be attributed to the following reasons. First, scholars often use a bricolage of theories to anchor strategic leadership studies. Some of these theories have conceptual and measurement challenges. For instance, the upper echelons theory has been criticised for not only having a cognitive black box problem but also uses demographic variables as proxies of the strategic leadership latent construct (Priem et al., 1999; Neely et al., 2020). Some scholars

contend that this compromises construct validity and prescriptive practicality of the results.

Second, both strategic leadership (2020; Samimi et al., 2020) and organisational output (Combs et al., 2005; Ritcher et al., 2017) are multifaceted and multidimensional constructs and therefore often suffer from fragmented definitions and operationalisations across empirical studies. In an effort to remedy the above situation this study opted to use psychographic indicators to operationalise the strategic leadership construct instead of the frequently used TMT characteristics (i.e., age, years of experience, education, and gender). Further, this study specified the organisational performance construct based on four sustainability indicators (Darnall et al., 2022).

Additionally, whereas some leadership studies include contingent factors in the conceptualisation others omit them entirely (Sing et al., 2023; Vera et al., 2022). These conceptual variations were observed to contribute towards some of the incongruent set of study findings regarding strategic leadership effects. The current study incorporated the external environment and digitalisation in its conceptual framework. It has been observed that the omission of contingent variables during specification of the regression model leads to omitted variable bias. If this issue is not addressed, it can lead to invalid causal claims regarding leadership effects (Antonakis et al., 2010).

Third, strategic leadership empirical studies often suffer from a number of methodological problems that can negate the veracity of the results obtained (Wulff, et al., 2023). For instance, some empirical studies usually rely on statistical tests that are either not powerful or analytical models that are not robust enough to

detect a significant difference in the dataset thus limiting the extent to which random chance or noise can be ruled out. Additionally, a number of studies fail to address the serious problem of endogeneity and autocorrelation which has been observed to result in invalid causal claims regarding strategic leadership effects on organisational performance (Ronkko & Maheshwaree, 2018).

Finally, some strategic leadership studies suffer from a context deficit. It has been posited that leadership is sensitive to the context in which it is embedded. Many leadership studies are operationalised in the context of developed countries usually targeting large private sector firms. Similar studies operationalised within public sector organisations in developed countries are usually not well represented or are under researched. Consequently, some of the incongruent findings may be attributed on failure to nuance certain idiosyncrasies inherent across different contexts (Johns, 2024).

### ***Strategic Leadership, External Environment and Organisational Performance.***

A number of scholars posit that the external environment is the fulcrum of strategic management and organisational behaviour. Despite this critical role empirical studies at times yield inconsistent set of study findings regarding the predictive influence of the external environment on organisational effectiveness. Whereas some empirical studies concluded a significant impact of the external environment on organisational effectiveness (Waldman et al., 2017; Omondi et al., 2022; Xiao & Chen, 2025), other set of studies observed that under certain leadership conditions this influence was either attenuated or not insignificant (Agle et al., 2006; Jansen et al., 2009; Machuki & Aosa, 2011). These

incongruent findings may be attributed to the following reasons.

First, scholars often use fragmented operationalisation of the external environment since it is a complex, multifaceted, and multidimensional construct (Frishammar, 2006). For instance, there are those who operationalise the construct using a finite number of exogenous factors within operating domain (Pearce et al., 2018; Qian et al., 2013). In contrast, other scholars specify the external environment perceptually based on its multiple dimensions (Dess & Beard, 1984; Sharfman & Dean 1991). These asymmetrical operationalisations often lead to variations in specifying the external environment construct across leadership studies (Harris, 2004).

Second, scholars usually use different conceptualisations of the external environment across empirical studies. There are those who position it as a moderator which either accentuates or attenuates leadership effects performance (Suder, 2025; Chen et al., 2019; Mkalama, 2014). In contrast, other scholars conceptualise the external environment as an independent variable competing with other endogenous factors to influence organisational performance directly (Mackey, 2008; Machuki & Aosa, 2011; Six et al., 2013).

Third, studies based on the leadership-external environment-performance organisational stream are usually operationalised under different contextual settings (i.e., country, region, industry) These contextual idiosyncrasies ideally require nuancing before making generalisations regarding the study findings across different contextual frames. Failure to take into account these contextual variations may result to inconsistent set of study findings regarding the predictive influence of the

external environment on organisational output (Johns, 2024).

Finally, a number of earlier studies heavily relied on variance decomposition analysis, a technique considered inadequate to capture the nested effects of external environmental factors on organisational performance. Leadership scholars are increasingly testing for the covariance association between the environment and performance or the causal effects of the environment on performance using structural equation modelling (Hair et al., 2014) or Hayes Process Macros (Hayes, 2017) respectively. These methodological approaches are considered to be more robust and statistically powerful thus shading more insights on the underlying relationships.

### ***Strategic Leadership, External Environment, Digitalisation and Organisational Performance***

A number of empirical studies anchored on the technology determinism postulations of various digital innovation theories observed that digitalisation is a significant determinant of organisational performance (Parker et al., 2017; Rodgers, 2003). However, when considered together with strategic leadership and the external environment two auxiliary relationships were observed. First, digitalisation mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and organisational performance (Kiss, et al., 2022; Smith, 2024). According to these study findings strategic leadership not only significantly influences digitalisation, but that digitalisation is an antecedent of positive organisational performance (Chatterje et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2021). Second, the external environment significantly moderates the primary relationship between strategic

leadership and organisational performance (Chen et al., 2019; Gong et al., 2021).

However, this study focused on investigated the predictive effect of digitalisation on sustainable organisational effectiveness when considered incrementally with leadership and the external environment. There are some inconsistencies in literature regarding the predictive effects of the external environmental on organisational performance when considered simultaneously with strategic leadership and digitalisation. Whereas some studies observed that the incremental predictive effects of the external environment on organisational performance are more dominant and significant (Chen, 2022), others concluded that influence of leadership leveraging digitalisation yielded a larger influence (Tang et al., 2015).

Several gaps were identified in this stream of research. First, empirical studies to determine the incremental predictive effects of the three variables on organisational performance are usually operationalised in the context of developed countries targeting large private sector firms (Kumar et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025). A limited number of similar studies are conducted within the ublic sector. This constitutes a contextual gap.

Second, leadership scholars usually use an array of theories to undergird digitalisation studies. Digitalisation is a nascent phenomenon that is still not well anchored in strategic leadership literature (Gradillas & Thomas, 2025). The use of these divergent theories to anchor digitalisation in leadership studies often leads to fragmented operationalisation. Additionally, some of the digitalisation theories have conceptual and measurement challenges which constrain academic discourse in the field

(Palmie et al., 2023). These facts point towards a theoretical gap.

### **Operationalisation of Constructs**

This study operationalised the strategic leadership construct based on four multi-level dispositional features associated with strategic leaders (Fischer, 2023; Hambrick & Wowak, 2021). The four indicators include the strategic leader's; personality traits, cognitions, social skills and emotional maturity. The leaders' personalities can be further classified into conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness and extroversion. Cognitive abilities deal with the strategic leaders' abstract reasoning, problem solving and adaptive capacity. Social skills encompass the strategic leaders' ability to leverage social networks when engaging different categories of the organisation's stakeholders. Finally, emotional maturity deals with the strategic leadership's ability to effectively leverage on their own emotions and those of others and use the information to positively influence organisational outcomes.

The external environment construct was specified using a reflective approach based on three dimensions namely, dynamism, complexity and munificence (Dess & Beard, 1984). Dynamism was operationalised based on the external environment's rate and scale of change respectively. Complexity was operationalised based on the number of factors in existence within a particular operating environment and their level of correlation. Finally, environmental munificence represented the ability of the organisation to access critical resources.

This study operationalised the digitalisation construct based on four reflective indicators (Venkatesh et al., 2003). First, is the

performance expectancy (i.e., functionalities) from the adoption and deployment of digitalisation. Second, is the effort expectancy (i.e., ease of use) attributed to digitalisation. Third, is the mitigation of risks associated with implementing digitalisation. Finally, are the institutional support (i.e., financial resources, human capital, processes, and culture) put in place by the strategic leadership to ensure successful implementation of digitalisation initiatives.

Finally, organisational performance was operationalised using the environmental, social, and governance – ESG framework (Bose, 2022). This is consistent with the current global agenda on ESG reporting which requires firms to make disclosures of non-financial information which has the potential of impacting organisational performance and long-term sustainability. ESG is a framework that provides stakeholders with nuanced and esoteric information about the performance of firms. Consequently, this study operationalised organisational performance construct based on four indicators namely: financial, operational impact, socio-ecological, and corporate governance impacts respectively (Searcy, 2012).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Three theories provided the theoretical framework on which this study was underpinned. The upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) anchored the relationship between strategic leadership and organisational performance. The theory posits the top management characteristics influences their strategic decisions and choices and subsequently organisational performance. The axioms of the environment dependency theory (Ansoff & Sullivan, 1993) were used to support the link between the environment and

organisational performance. The theory postulates that the performance of organisations is predicated on their ability to maintain a fit with the external operating environment. Finally, the predictions of the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (Venkatesh et al., 2003) were used to probe the relationship between digitalisation and organisational performance. The theory contends that adoption

and deployment of technology enhances organisational performance.

### Conceptual Model

The conceptual model presented in Figure 1 below was informed by the theoretical framework above and the review of relevant empirical literature relating to how the four constructs interact.

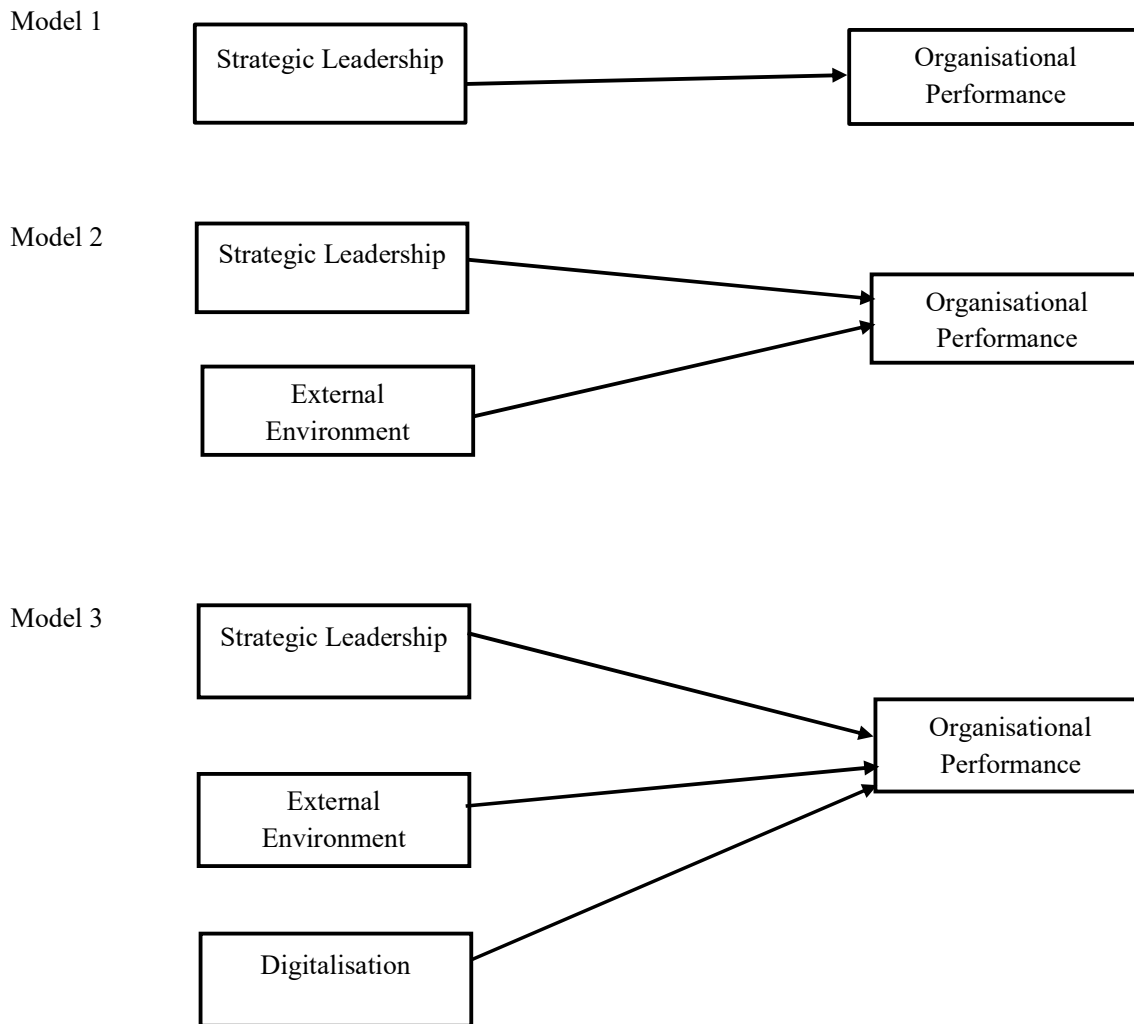


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

## Research Hypothesis

The following research hypothesis was stated.

*H<sub>1</sub>: The incremental predictive effects of strategic leadership, external environment, and digitalisation on sustainable organisational performance of State Corporations in Kenya are significant.*

## Methodology

The study was based on a descriptive cross-sectional census survey of 250 State Corporations in Kenya. A close ended structured questionnaire based on a 5 point Likert type scale was used to collect primary data. Respondents of the study comprised members of the TMT within the SCs. The targeted respondents were considered best placed to provide accurate information regarding the study variables.

## Analysis

The primary data collected was analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression. This involved establishing the incremental predictive power of strategic leadership, external environment, and digitalisation on sustainable organisational performance using the stepwise method. This approach involved sequentially adding a predictor variable to the regression model and measuring the changes to the test statistics. The statistical significance of the  $R^2$ ,  $R^2$  change, and  $F$  change respectively was then determined. Additionally, the study tested the significance of the regression coefficients (i.e.,  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ , and  $\beta_3$ ) associated with each predictor variable in the regression model at the 95% CI ( $\alpha=0.05$ ).

## Results

The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis conducted in SPSS are presented in Tables 1-3 below.

**Table 1: Model Summary**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	SE	R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.876 <sup>a</sup>	.767	.766	.21655	.767	455.008	1	138	.000
2	.910 <sup>b</sup>	.828	.825	.18696	.061	48.148	1	137	.000
3	.915 <sup>c</sup>	.837	.833	.18283	.009	7.253	1	136	.008

Model summary 1 shows that leadership accounted for 76.7% of the variations in the performance of SCs, *ipso facto* the residual 23.3% of the changes in performance was attributed to effects of un-modeled variables. The corresponding  $R^2$  and  $F$  changes were statistically significant  $R^2$  change = .767,  $F$

change (1, 138) = 455.008, *Sig. of F* change = .000. Additionally, Model summary 2 involved simultaneously regressing organizational performance on strategic leadership and the external environment. The regression model accounted for 82.8% of the variations performance, *Ipso facto* the remaining 17.2% of

variations was attributed to other factor not included in Model 2. Similarly, the incremental changes were statistically significant,  $R^2$  change = .061,  $F$  change (1, 137) = 48.148, *Sig. of F* change = .000. This implied that addition of the external environment variable in Model 2 significantly enhanced the model’s predictive power compared to Model 1. Finally, Model summary 3 provides the results of simultaneously regressing organizational performance on the three predictor variables. The model was responsible for 83.3% of the

variations in performance of SCs, *ipso facto* the residual variations of 16.7% was attributed to un-modeled factors. Both the  $R^2$  and  $F$  changes were significant after the inclusion of the third predictor variable,  $R^2$  change = .009,  $F$  change (1, 136) = 7.253, *Sig. of F* change = .008. The addition of the digitalisation variable significantly enhanced the predictive power of Model 3 relative to that of models 2 and 1 respectively.

**Table 2: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1.	Regression	21.337	1	21.337	455.008	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	6.471	138	.047		
	Total	27.809	139			
2.	Regression	23.020	2	11.510	329.306	.000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	4.789	137	.035		
	Total	27.809	139			
3.	Regression	23.263	3	7.754	231.976	.000 <sup>d</sup>
	Residual	4.546	136	.033		
	Total	27.809	139			

Table 2 above presents the results of analysis of variance test. The findings indicate that all the three regression models were robust. Model 1 with one predictor variable was observed to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 138) = 455.008$ ,  $p = .000$ . Similarly, Model 2 with two predictor variables was statistically significant,  $F(2, 137) = 455.008$ ,  $p = .000$ . Finally, regression Model 3 with the three predictor variables was also statistically significant,  $F(3, 136) = 455.008$ ,  $p$

= .000. The finding thus indicated that all the three models were robust and could thus be used in predict the true population parameters.

**Table 3: Regression Coefficients**

Model	Variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig	Lower	Upper
1.	(Constant)	-5.307	.415		12.789	.000	-6.127	-4.486
	Strategic Leadership	2.296	.108	.876	21.331	.000	2.083	2.508
2.	(Constant)	-3.015	.487		-6.187	.000	-3.978	-2.051
	Strategic Leadership	1.943	.106	.741	18.348	.000	1.734	2.152
	External Environment	-.308	.044	-.280	-6.939	.000	-.395	-.220
3.	(Constant)	-2.838	.481		-5.899	.000	-3.789	-1.886
	Strategic Leadership	1.752	.125	.669	13.972	.000	1.504	2.000
	External Environment	-.281	.044	-.256	-6.332	.000	-.369	-.193
	Digitalisation	.145	.054	.127	2.693	.008	.038	.251

Finally, Table 3 shows the regression coefficients arising from the hierarchical multiple regression analysis using the stepwise method. Analysis of the Beta coefficients of regression Model 3 indicates that all the three predictor variables significantly influenced the performance of SCs. First, strategic leadership was observed to have a positive and significant influence,  $\beta = 1.752$ ,  $t = 13.972$ ,  $p = .000$ , 95% CI [1.504, 2.000]. Additionally, the external environment had a negative and significant influence,  $\beta = -.281$ ,  $t = -6.332$ ,  $p = .000$ , 95% CI [-.369, -.193]. Finally, digitalization had a significantly positive influence,  $\beta = .145$ ,  $t = 2.693$ ,  $p = .008$ , 95% CI [.038, .251]. When the variables were ranked based on the magnitude of their respective predictive power on organizational performance, strategic leadership was ranked first, followed by the external environment then digitalization. The null

hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) suggested that  $R^2$  change = 0,  $F$  change = 0,  $\beta_1 = 0$ ,  $\beta_2 = 0$  and  $\beta_3 = 0$ . However, the above results show that  $R^2$  change  $\neq 0$ ,  $F$  change  $\neq 0$  and that  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$  and  $\beta_3$  are  $\neq 0$ . This implies that the incremental predictive power of strategic leadership, external environment and digitalisation are all statistically significant resulting in rejection of  $H_{01}$ . Consequently, hypothesis  $H_1$  is thus supported.

#### Addressing Potential Endogeneity

This study circumspcctly addressed the issue of potential endogeneity by conducting augmented regression analysis based on the two stage least squares (TSLS) method. The first part involved regressing strategic leadership, the predictor variable (X) on the external environment which was modelled as an instrumental variable (i.e. exogenous variable). In the second stage organisational performance (Y) was regressed

on the predicted values of X, obtained from the first stage regression, in order to establish the corresponding beta coefficient of the regression and in so doing addressed the omitted variable bias. Two control variables (i.e., age and size of the organisations) were also included in the augmented regression as covariates. The

augmented regression results indicated that endogeneity was not an issue thus reducing the potential of making invalid causal claims (i.e., Type I error). The results obtained from conducting the augmented regression test in SPSS is shown below in Tables 4-7 below.

**Table 4: Model Description**

Equation 1	Variables	Type of Variable
	Organisational performance	dependent
	Strategic leadership	predictor
	External Environment	Instrumental

**Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Equation 1	Regression	10.867	1	10.867	147.228	.000
	Residuals	10.186	138	.074		
	Total	21.053	139			

**Table 6: Model Summary**

Equation 1	Multiple R	.718
	R Square	.516
	Adjusted R Square	.513
	Std. Error of the Estimate	.272

**Table 7: Regression Coefficients**

	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
Equation (Constant)	-8.996	1.033		-8.708	.000
SL mean	3.253	.268	1.241	12.134	.000

Results of the TSLS regression shows a strong positive correlation exists between leadership and performance of SCs,  $R = .718$ . The augmented regression model was responsible for 51.6% of the variations in the performance of SCs ( $R^2 = .516$ ), *ipso facto*, the remaining 48.4% of the variations in was due to unmodelled factors. Further, the ANOVA test results was significant,  $F(1, 138) = 147.228$ ,  $p = .000$ . Finally, the result how that the regression coefficients was significant,  $\beta = 3.253$ ,  $t = 12.134$ ,  $p = .000$ . As can be observed excluding the instrumental variable (i.e., external environment) in model 1 as captured in Table 3 above attenuates the magnitude of the true causal effect of leadership on organisational effectiveness. This difference in the size of the regression coefficients of leadership in Table 3 and Table 7 is due to the omitted variables bias. The two stage least squares regression results were thus considered more consistent than the OLS regression since the former addressed the problem of potential endogeneity.

## Discussion

The study findings show that strategic leadership significantly predicts the sustainable organisational performance of SCs. Although the current study uses varied operationalisations of both strategic leadership and organisational performance constructs, the findings align well with those of similar empirical investigations (Gong et al., 2021; Trieu et al., 2024). This validates the predictions of the anchoring theory.

Digitalisation is observed to have a significant incremental predictive influence on the sustainable organisational effectiveness of SCs. These findings are supported by the results of various empirical studies (Singh et al., 2021; Ferreira et al., 2024). Further, the results

confirm the predictions of the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (Venkatesh et al., 2003) which predict a positive link between technological innovations and organisational performance. The implication is that SCs that leveraged digitalisation have a competitive advantage which translated to superior organisational performance.

According to the results the external environment has a significant incremental predictive influence on the effectiveness of SCs. The implication is that the performance of SCs is largely predicated on the external environmental conditions. For instance, the performance of SCs was significantly impinged when the environmental conditions were perceived to be unfavourable. In contrast, the performance of SCs improved under favourable external environmental conditions. These results are consistent with the predictions of various population ecology theories which posit that the performance of organisations is largely predicated upon the dynamic capability of organisations to align with the happenings in their external environment. The findings also align well with the results of similar empirical studies (Suder, 2025; Waldman et al., 2017).

## Conclusion

Three observations can be gleaned from the findings in respect to these public enterprises. First, SCs not only require their top leadership to have the necessary demographic characteristics essential for making the right strategic decisions leading to superior sustainable organisational performance, but equally important, individuals with certain multilevel dispositional features (i.e., psychographics characteristics). Second, in order to be effective SCs need top leadership who are adept at continuously evaluating their

organisation's external operating environment and making appropriate strategic decisions. For instance, this can involve facilitating SCs to rapidly leverage their internal competencies to sense and seize opportunities occasioned by constant changes in their external environment leading to superior organisational performance (Teece et al., 1997; Kiilu et al., 2024). Finally, SCs require strategic leaders skilled in digitalisation and implementing enterprise wide digital transformations aimed at enhancing different facets of sustainable organisational performance. Scholars refer to this competency as digital leadership (Tigre et al., 2025).

### **Implications**

The results contribute to knowledge by testing the predictions of the three theories underpinning its conceptualisation. The findings contribute towards the ongoing debate among scholars advancing the postulations of various leadership, population ecology, and digitalisation theories and their influence on organisational behaviour. The results show that the three variables have a significant incremental predictive influence on sustainable organisational performance.

The findings add value to policy by proving insights on how SCs can strengthen their strategic leadership framework and the importance of continually aligning their operations with the external operating environment in order to positively influence organisational output. Additionally, the findings highlight the importance of SCs adopting and deploying digitalisation in their operations. These aspects can assist in drafting appropriate policies geared towards improving the sustainable performance of SCs.

Finally, in respect to management practice, the results confirm that the sustainable performance

of SCs is not only predicated upon strategic leadership but also the influences of other contingent factors such as the external environment and emerging digitalisation technologies. The continuous adoption of technological innovations and the ability of strategic leadership to successfully navigate their organisations in turbulent, complex, and hostile environments, is often considered a strategic challenge for many managers in public sector organisations. The study findings provide useful insights that will assist management practitioners identify factors which influence the sustainable performance of their organisations.

### **Limitations**

Two limitations were observed. First, this study was operationalized in the context of SCs in Kenya, which is a developing country. The SCs operate within a contextual setting characterised by certain peculiarities such as national values, political influences, and corporate culture just to mention a few. Therefore, this may limit the extent to which the findings can be inferred or generalised to other contexts. Second, strategic leadership effects on organisational performance outputs are usually lagged, implying that the true impact of their strategic choices and decisions may only be realized after some passage of time. However, most leadership studies including the current one rely on survey research design as the default methodology to answer research questions. It has been argued that survey designs have limitations (Knippenberg, 2023). Consequently, a number of scholars posit that longitudinal research designs capture the impact of leadership over a longer time horizon thus providing deeper insights on leadership effects (Spector, 2019; Riggio & Mumford, 2011).

## Suggestions for Future Research

This paper makes three suggestions for future studies. First, it would be interesting to test the effects size of the three predictor variables on sustainable organisational performance in a different contextual setting in Kenya (i.e. Financial or Manufacturing firms in the private sector). Second, scholars can consider replicating the study but altering the theoretical framework to determine if the results will still hold. Finally, future leadership studies can consider using structural equation modelling to test for the influences of strategic leadership, external environment and digitalisation on sustainable organisational performance.

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## Conflicts of Interest

I declare there is no conflict of interests in the research.

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