

Intellectual Stimulation and Team Performance in Small and Medium Enterprises in the Cut Flower Industry in Kenya

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effect of intellectual stimulation on team performance in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the cut flower industry in Kenya. This study employed a positivism research philosophy and utilized a descriptive correlational research design. The study population consisted of 640 senior and middle-level managers from 62 SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya. A total of 271 participants were selected for the study using a combination of stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The collection of primary data involved the use of a questionnaire guide. Using Statistical Package for Social Sciences, data analysis was done by descriptive statistical analysis (means and standard deviations) and multiple linear regression analysis. The study results demonstrated that innovativeness had a positive and significant influence on team performance ($\beta = 0.283$, $t = 5.073$, $p < 0.05$). The study findings further revealed that employee empowerment positively and significantly influenced team performance ($\beta = 0.183$, $t = 2.587$, $p = 0.010$). Additionally, the findings demonstrate that knowledge sharing had a positive and significant influence on team performance ($\beta = 0.206$, $t = 2.942$, $p = 0.004$). The results further showed that the intellectual stimulation of leaders has a significant positive influence on team performance in SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya ($\beta = 0.673$, $t = 14.895$, $p < 0.05$). This study recommends that leaders in SMEs in the cut flower industry should challenge team members to think differently and to promote individual and team growth. In addition, leaders in SMEs should introduce rewards and recognition for motivating teams. Moreover, leaders in SMEs in the cut flower industry should establish organizational practices and policies that support the use of existing skills, provide equal opportunities for staff development and encourage participation in decision-making.

Keywords: Cut flower industry, Intellectual stimulation, Small and medium enterprises, Team performance.

Introduction

Teams have become the cornerstone of organizational success and a global source of knowledge since they are likely to yield more outcomes compared to individuals, provide innovative solutions and thus enhance performance (Ficapal-Cusí et al., 2021). In today's dynamic, interconnected and culturally diverse corporate environment, reliable team performance is critical for any organization. It enables an organization achieve its goals considering that the organization consists of a collection of people with different abilities (Umar et al., 2020). More than 90% of organizations believe that teams increase employee participation and performance and as a result, they are adjusting accordingly to achieve these desired outcomes (Delice et al., 2019). This is echoed by O'Neill and Salas (2018) who stated that effective teamwork is related to innovation, safety and fewer errors. However, Han et al. (2018) indicate that high performance in teams is difficult to achieve and most teams fall

short of their maximum potential. To address this, some scholars such as Chaudhary et al. (2022), posit that intellectual stimulation of individuals and teams can improve key facets of team performance, such as team effectiveness, team cohesion and team efficiency.

Intellectual stimulation expresses a transformational leader's capability to encourage rationality and thorough problem-solving and to stimulate the intelligence of followers (Le & Le, 2021). It is a construct of transformational leadership that supports that when followers are allowed to solve problems, analyze situations and critically question long-held beliefs or assumptions, then the leader can be said to be developing their followers to pursue innovative and creative ways of solving existing problems (Edirisooriya, 2020). Through intellectual stimulation, a transformational leader encourages inventiveness and autonomy among the followers, by involving them in the decision-making process and encouraging their creativity and innovative efforts to achieve solutions (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Intellectual stimulation promotes intelligence, rationality and careful problem-solving, enabling the firm to find new ways of doing things (Anselmann & Mulder, 2020). In addition, intellectual stimulation by leaders should include investment in knowledge creation and continuous improvement of employees' skills, motivating new perspectives and contributions from subordinates and continually coaching employees on self-efficacy to enhance both individual and team performance (Awori, 2018).

In the context of this paper, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the cut flower industry in Kenya were targeted and the study's focus was on the effect of intellectual stimulation on team performance. Agriculture is the main driver of the economy of Kenya and research has shown that the horticulture sub-sector accounts for over \$300 million of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of agriculture and 38% of the total export earnings (Samoei & Kipchoge, 2021). Besides, fresh flowers make up about 40% of all horticulture exports from Kenya (Chepngeno et al., 2019). However, the cut flower industry in Kenya is threatened by rising international competition and shifting economic circumstances, such as declining commodity prices (Adeola et al., 2018). Small and Medium Enterprises contribute more than 85% of the employment and production in the cut flower industry but they are considered to quickly decline or collapse at a higher rate than large firms. This is explained by a report that indicated a decline in production of cut flowers from 173,000 tonnes in 2020 to 160,000 tonnes in 2021 (Kenya Flower Council, 2022). The need of having SMEs in Kenya's cut flower industry to regain their status as the top exchange earners and maintain their drive towards poverty alleviation and employment creation was a key motivation to this research.

The study aimed to fill in the contextual, conceptual, and methodological gaps that characterize the few studies undertaken on intellectual stimulation and team performance. Halim et al. (2021) recommended studies in other countries different from Asia, Europe and America in examining the role of intellectual stimulation and team performance. In their study on the impact of intellectual stimulation on organizational performance in Jordan, Alsayed et al. (2020) found that there is a significant relationship between intellectual stimulation and organizational performance. This study, however, was on the education sector in Jordan and therefore left a contextual gap. In Kenya, Chebon et al. (2019) revealed that applying intellectual stimulation enables supervisors to encourage high productivity through creativity and innovation, and encourages the staff to rethink ideas that have never been questioned thus influencing employee performance. However, this study has a methodological gap as it was a case study of a healthcare facility in Kenya and the findings may not be generalizable to the cut flower industry. The current study is therefore justified to

examine the influence of intellectual stimulation on team performance in SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya.

Literature Review

The theoretical and conceptual basis of the research is explained in this section. The literature review section covers a discussion of the theoretical and conceptual literature and also the empirical research pertinent to intellectual stimulation and team performance. The study is anchored on the transformational leadership theory which offers important theoretical and conceptual perspectives that support the core ideas of intellectual stimulation and how it can influence team performance (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Theoretical Review

This study was anchored on the transformational leadership theory by Burns (1978), which indicates that transformational leaders possess unique characteristics that make them capable of charting new paths for modern organizations. According to Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leadership has four components that comprise inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Intellectual stimulation constructs as defined by Bass (1985), include arousing awareness, creativity and innovativeness, empowerment and independence which drive both individual and team performance. Otieno (2019) measured intellectual stimulation by the ability of the top management to encourage creativity and innovation, job design and employee involvement while Njiiu (2018) looked at the attributes of knowledge-sharing, creativity and risk-taking. In this study, intellectual stimulation was measured by innovativeness, employee empowerment and knowledge-sharing (Chebon et al., 2019). It was hypothesized in this study that innovativeness, employee empowerment and knowledge sharing positively influence team performance as depicted in Figure 1.

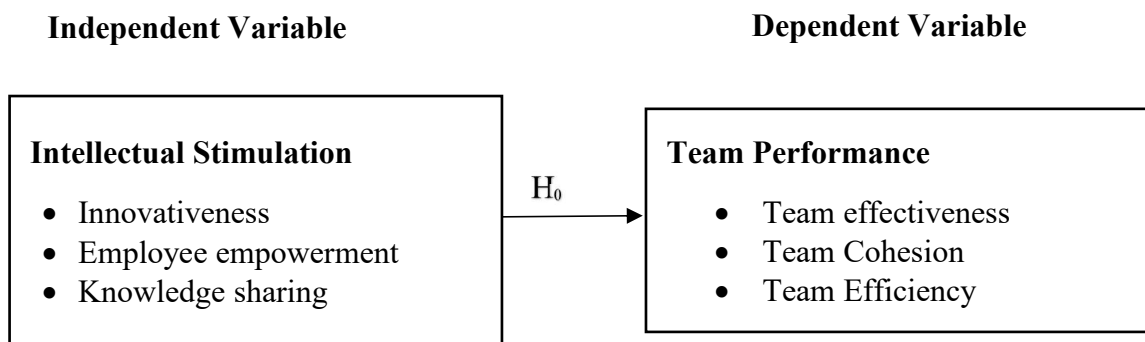


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Empirical Review

Intellectual stimulation is about challenging the followers to originate new and different solutions to industry problems. It refers to the leader's ability to help followers make their own decisions and rethink the old practices (Alsayyed et al., 2020). The dimensions of intellectual stimulation discussed include innovativeness, employee empowerment, and knowledge sharing. Innovation can be defined as the organization's tendency to introduce new ideas, products, or services to satisfy customer demands now and in the future. Sahoo (2019) suggested that to improve performance, firms need to develop their innovation capabilities. Innovativeness is the implementation of ideas in a practical way resulting in the introduction of new goods or services or improvement in the current offering of goods or

services and can be seen as the essential strategic capability for survival and growth (Tran, 2021). Innovation has a positive and significant effect on improving individual and team performance since it contributes towards improved individual performance which ultimately helps the team to meet its targets (Adi, 2019).

Tran (2021) conducted a study whose purpose was to explore the moderating role of knowledge sharing and the mediating role of innovativeness in the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance. The study was conducted among employees working in industrial enterprises in Vietnam and the study findings show that transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on innovativeness and that innovativeness has a positive impact on organizational performance. Kijkasiwat and Phuensane (2020) examined the relationship between innovation and firm performance of SMEs in 29 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The study also investigates whether the impact of innovation in products and processes on firm performance is affected by financial capital. The study findings indicate that SMEs are capable of improving performance and increasing survival rates through innovation and that by embracing innovation in their products and corporate activities, SMEs tend to survive during recession periods. However, another study by Domi et al. (2019) investigated the interplay between innovativeness, innovation behavior and SME's performance and established contradictory findings. Their study determined that innovativeness did not significantly affect performance.

Empowering employees is the long-term process of providing the tools, training and motivating the workers to perform at the optimum level. Odero et al. (2020) describe employee empowerment as how meaningful employees find their jobs, how they feel regarding their competence, autonomy and their contribution to decision making observing further that employee empowerment is measurements including staff coaching, delegation of responsibilities and employee participation. Bose and Emirates (2018) conducted a study to examine the impact of employee empowerment on employee performance in the banking industry in the UAE. The study findings concluded that there is no significant relationship between employee empowerment and employee performance. However, these findings were contradicted by Dabo and Ndan (2018) who conducted a study to determine the impact of employee empowerment on the organizational performance of quoted bottling companies in Nigeria. The study found employee empowerment to be significant in determining the influence of employee empowerment on organizational performance in Nigeria. Another study by Odero et al. (2020) examined the influence of employee empowerment on the performance of deposit-taking Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) in Kenya and found that employee empowerment influences the performance of deposit-taking SACCOs.

Knowledge sharing is the "act of making knowledge available to others within the organization" and involves some conscious action on the part of the individual who possesses the knowledge (Gagné et al., 2019). Knowledge sharing can occur in various ways, such as communicating and networking with people, documenting organizing, and capturing knowledge, solving problems learning new skills, assisting colleagues. It can be considered most important to organizations as it develops innovative capacity as well as contributes towards individual learning which is essential for new practices (Tran, 2021). Anselmann and Mulder (2020) conducted a study whose aim was to determine whether a relationship exists between transformational leadership, safe team climate, knowledge sharing and reflection, and team performance among nursing and social work teams. According to this study, knowledge sharing is not directly related to team performance. However, these findings were contrary to Jamshed and Majeed's (2019) study which determined that

knowledge sharing and team emotional intelligence matter in the delivery of superior team performance in the health sector in Pakistan. Another study by Abdelwhab et al. (2019) demonstrated that knowledge-sharing practices positively impact organizational performance. Additionally, Ajegbomogun and Diyaolu (2018) revealed that knowledge sharing significantly influenced job performance in universities in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study employed the positivism research philosophy, which advocates for the formulation and testing of hypotheses. This approach aligns with the philosophical perspective of natural sciences and involves studying observable social phenomena to generate universally applicable generalizations (Schindler, 2022). The study utilized a descriptive correlational research methodology, which was the most suitable for establishing the relationship between intellectual stimulation and team performance. The target population constituted 640 managers from 62 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the cut flower industry in Kenya (Kenya Flower Council, 2022). The list of the SMEs was obtained from the Kenya Flower Council and the sample methodology employed for this study was a multistage sampling, utilizing both stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques to pick a total of 271 study participants. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire that was distributed through the electronic administration technique (Google Forms) and the drop-and-pick technique. The administration targeted senior and middle-level managers inside each SME. A pilot study was undertaken to assess the questionnaire's reliability and validity before its use in data collecting. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including measures such as means, standard deviations, percentages, and frequencies. Additionally, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to test the extent to which intellectual stimulation influenced team performance. Tables were used for visual data presentation the findings.

Findings

This section presents the research findings from multiple linear regression and descriptive statistical analysis. The results include the research participants' demographics, the descriptive findings of intellectual stimulation and team performance, and the multiple linear regression results of the effect of intellectual stimulation on team performance.

Demographic Characteristics

Two hundred and seventy-one participants made up the study sample and 203 of them responded, proving an acceptable response rate of 74.9%. Table 1 shows the demographics of the cut flower companies and the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Indicator	Percentage
Gender	Male	62.6%
	Female	37.4%
Age of Respondents	Below 25	0.5%
	25-29	14.3%
	30 - 34	24.6%
	35 - 39	22.7%
	40 - 44	14.8%
	46 - 49	13.8%
	50 - 54	7.9%
	55 - 59	1.5%

Current Position of Respondents	General manager	3.0%
	Farm Manager	11.5%
	Production Manager	14.5%
	Section Head	71.0%
Level of Education	Secondary	2.0%
	Certificate	3.4%
	Diploma	38.9%
	Bachelor's Degree	51.7%
	Master's Degree	3.9%
Length of Work in The Organization	5 years and below	13.8%
	6 – 10 years	68.0%
	11 – 20 years	15.8%
	20 years and above	2.5%
Number of Employees Supervised	10 and below	11.8%
	11 - 29	36.0%
	30 - 49	28.1%
	50 and above	24.1%

Descriptive Statistics for Team Performance

The dependent variable in this research was team performance, which was measured using three constructs which were team effectiveness, team cohesion, and team efficiency. The sub-variables were measured using a rating scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents 'strongly disagree' and 5 represents 'strongly agree'. The responses were analyzed using means (M) and standard deviations (SD). The research findings are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Team Performance

	Mean	SD
Team Effectiveness		
Our team members have the skills needed to perform effectively.	4.07	.890
Our team leader sets targets to achieve expected objectives.	4.21	.646
Our team leader ensures that our team is innovative	3.92	.809
Our team is motivated to work together toward a common goal	4.08	.678
Our team delivers quality work within the expected time	4.18	.690
Our team leader ensures that our team has continuous improvement	4.06	.725
Our team is always committed to the task at hand	4.18	.670
Our team achieves the expected goals	4.10	.656
Our leader ensures that our team has innovativeness	4.01	.717
Team Cohesion		
Our team members have social interactions in the workplace.	4.02	.758
Our team members have social interactions outside the workplace.	3.86	.903
Our team members are motivated by the intention to stay on the team.	3.92	.763
Our team members have a shared bond with each other.	3.99	.787
Our team members coordinate well in problem-solving.	4.05	.794
Our team experiences a low level of absenteeism.	4.09	.729
Team Efficiency		
Our team is compliant with the set objectives of our company.	4.04	.647
Our team ensures that goals are measured.	4.00	.702
Our team complies with the cost-cutting measures of our company.	4.01	.758
Our team is committed to company decisions.	4.10	.697
Our team has the needed cognitive ability to deliver on targets	4.10	.656

Our team is always looking for ways to improve our production processes.	4.17	.712
Grand mean and standard deviation	4.06	0.733

The descriptive statistical analysis results of team performance showed that the average mean score of team performance was 4.06 implying that generally, respondents agreed with the statements. Besides, the average SD (0.733) was low indicating that there was a low dispersion of responses from the mean.

Descriptive Analysis for Intellectual Stimulation

The study used three constructs that comprised innovativeness, employee empowerment, and knowledge sharing to measure leaders' intellectual stimulation. A scale of 1 to 5, with 1 denoting strongly disagree and 5 denoting strongly agree, was employed by the study. The study used means (M), standard deviation (SD), and coefficient of variation (CV) to analyze the responses. Table 3 illustrates the study findings.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Intellectual Stimulation

	Mean	SD
Innovativeness		
My team leader fosters a culture of innovation	3.89	.791
My leader encourages us to introduce new ideas	4.05	.851
My team leader encourages us to improve product features	4.13	.760
My team leader encourages us to improve products intended use	4.08	.717
My team leader supports rewards and recognition for innovations	3.94	.784
My team leader gives us the opportunity to solve problems	4.00	.782
Employee empowerment		
My team leader supports our use of existing skills	3.98	.684
My team leader encourages our participation in decision making	3.93	.796
My team leader provides us with the resources that we need	4.04	.710
My team leader motivates us to perform at the optimum level	4.06	.753
My team leader empowers us through coaching	3.95	.844
My team leader empowers us through delegation	3.87	.825
My team leader supports our capacity development	3.95	.751
Knowledge sharing		
My team leader supports capturing of knowledge	4.01	.765
My team leader supports new skills development	4.10	.736
My team leader supports equal opportunities for staff	4.07	.772
My team leader supports communication platforms	3.97	.724
My team leader supports working together to achieve goals.	4.11	.719
My team leader supports knowledge sharing for fast completion of new products developments	4.06	.744
My team leader supports knowledge sharing for organizational modernization capabilities	3.95	.771
Grand mean and SD	4.01	0.764

The statements on intellectual stimulation by leaders had an average mean score of 4.01 indicating that the respondents largely agreed with the statements. Additionally, the average SD (0.747) was low indicating that there was a low variation of the responses from the mean.

Multiple Regression of Intellectual Stimulation on Team Performance

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate the influence of intellectual stimulation on team performance in SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya. The model had team performance as the dependent variable against the sub-variables of intellectual stimulation (knowledge sharing, innovation, and employee empowerment). Table 4, 5 and 6 depict a statistical presentation of the findings that include the correlation coefficient (R), and the R-squared to determine the model fitness, ANOVA to show the significance of the study variables and Coefficients to draw attention to the extent to which the dependent variables was influenced by the independent variables .

Table 4: Model Summary for Intellectual Stimulation and Team Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.726 ^a	.528	.520	.28128

a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Sharing, Innovativeness, Employee Empowerment

The study findings in Table 4 demonstrated that the r-squared was 0.528 implying that knowledge sharing, innovation, and employee empowerment can explain 52.8% of the change in team performance of SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya. The study further conducted the ANOVA test to assess the significance of the model. The results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: ANOVA for Intellectual Stimulation and Team Performance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	17.582	3	5.861	74.078	.000 ^b
	Residual	15.744	199	.079		
	Total	33.327	202			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Sharing, Innovativeness, Employee Empowerment

b. Dependent Variable: Team performance

The findings summarized in Table 5 portray that the f-value was statistically significant (F = 74.078, p < 0.05). This indicates that the regression model fits the empirical data effectively. The findings further illustrate that at least one of the sub-variables of intellectual stimulation (knowledge sharing, innovation, and employee empowerment) has a significant effect on the team performance of SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya. The research further investigated the significance of the sub-variables of intellectual stimulation (knowledge sharing, innovation, and employee empowerment) in influencing team performance in SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya. The study findings are provided in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients for Intellectual Stimulation and Team Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.331	.182		7.326	.000
	Innovativeness	.283	.056	.354	5.073	.000
	Employee Empowerment	.183	.071	.216	2.587	.010
	Knowledge Sharing	.206	.070	.240	2.942	.004

a. Dependent Variable: Team performance

The research findings provided in Table 6 revealed that innovativeness had a positive and significant influence on team performance in SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya ($\beta = 0.283$, $t = 5.073$, $p < 0.05$). Further, employee empowerment positively and significantly influenced team performance in SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya ($\beta = 0.183$, $t = 2.587$, $p = 0.010$). Additionally, knowledge sharing had a positive and significant influence on team performance in SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya ($\beta = 0.206$, $t = 2.942$, $p = 0.004$). These findings imply that a unit change in innovation would cause a corresponding change of 0.283 in team performance. Additionally, a unit change in employee empowerment would cause a corresponding change of 0.183 in team performance. Moreover, a unit change in knowledge sharing is expected to lead to a corresponding change of 0.209 in team performance.

Discussion of Results

The study results demonstrated that innovativeness had a positive and significant influence on team performance ($\beta = 0.283$, $t = 5.073$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that the act of introducing new ideas, products, processes, or methods to an organization influences team performance. These findings support Sahoo (2019) who suggested that to improve performance manufacturing firms need to develop their innovation capabilities. The study findings also agree with Expósito and Sanchis-Llopis (2019) and Jalil et al. (2022) who concluded that innovation capability and making the right innovation decision are crucial in securing the desired SME performance. Similarly, Kijkasiwat and Phuensane (2020) demonstrated that SMEs are capable of improving performance and increasing survival rates through innovation and that by embracing innovation in their products and corporate activities there will be improved performance. However, these findings contradict Tran (2021) who found that innovativeness has no significant effect on organizational performance. The divergence in results could be explained by the fact that innovativeness was a mediating variable while in this study it was a dependent variable. The findings from the current study contradicted the findings by Domi et al. (2019) who revealed that innovativeness does not significantly affect performance indicating that if SMEs are open to new ideas and these new ideas are quickly accepted, their performance is not likely to improve.

The study findings further revealed that employee empowerment positively and significantly influenced team performance ($\beta = 0.183$, $t = 2.587$, $p = 0.010$). The results showed that leaders in SMEs in the cut flower sector empower their employees for improved team performance. Past studies supported by these findings include Vu (2020) who in a literature review observed that employee empowerment has a positive influence on employee performance. Similarly, Okochi and Ateke (2020) concluded that employee empowerment is a viable strategy for optimizing employee performance further recommending that firms that seek to optimize employee performance should institute planned employee empowerment programs. Yin et al. (2019) in a study carried out in China found that empowerment practices had a positive impact on organizational performance. The findings also agreed with Dabo and Ndan (2018) that employee empowerment positively influences organizational performance in Nigeria. Similarly, Odero et al. (2020) established that improvement in employee empowerment leads to improvement in the performance of deposit-taking SACCOs in Kenya. However, the findings contradict the findings by Bose and Emirates (2018) who concluded that there is no significant relationship between employee empowerment and employee performance in the banking industry in the UAE.

This study's findings demonstrate that knowledge sharing had a positive and significant influence on team performance ($\beta = 0.206$, $t = 2.942$, $p = 0.004$). These findings are aligned

with the assumption that knowledge sharing is an “act of making knowledge available to others within the organization” and involves some conscious action on the part of the individual who possesses the knowledge (Gagné et al., 2019) . The findings concur with Ajegbomogun and Diyaolu (2018) who demonstrated that knowledge sharing can be positively associated with team and firm performance, through working together to achieve goals and new skills development. Further, this study supports the findings of Jamshed and Majeed (2019) who established that knowledge-sharing matters in the delivery of superior team performance. Contrary to these findings is a study by Anselmann and Mulder (2020) which revealed that knowledge sharing is not directly related to team performance. The study by Anselmann and Mulder (2020) was different from this study in that the study targeted nursing and social work teams in Germany while this study targeted SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya.

Conclusion

The study findings determined that three constructs of intellectual stimulation including innovativeness, employee empowerment and knowledge sharing had a positive and significant influence on team performance. This led to the conclusion that leaders in SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya influence team performance by fostering a culture of innovation, encouraging the introduction of new ideas, improving product features and rewarding innovations. Similarly, the study concluded that leaders in SMEs in the cut flower industry influence team performance through employee empowerment. This is by supporting existing skills and encouraging participation in decision-making. The study also concluded that leaders in SMEs in the cut flower industry in Kenya influence team performance by supporting knowledge sharing. This is seen through equal opportunities for staff and working together to achieve a common goal.

Recommendations

This study recommends that leaders in SMEs in the cut flower industry should employ intellectual stimulation behaviors which include innovativeness, employee empowerment and knowledge sharing. To do this, this study recommends that the leaders should challenge team members to think differently to promote individual and team growth which leads to superior team performance. The study also recommends that for increased innovation, leaders in SMEs should introduce rewards and recognition as they play a significant role in motivating teams since they make people feel valued. Moreover, the study recommends that leaders in SMEs in the cut flower industry should establish organizational practices and policies that support the use of existing skills, and encourage participation in decision-making. Further, this study recommends that the leaders should promote knowledge sharing by supporting new skills development and providing equal opportunities for staff development.

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