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**Leadership Styles and Academic Staff Turnover Intentions in Universities in Kenya**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of leadership styles on academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. The specific objectives were to: establish the effect of employee leadership styles on academic staff turnover intentions; examine the effect of autocratic leadership style on academic staff turnover intentions; investigate the effect of employee democratic leadership style on academic staff turnover intentions and finally assess the effect of laissez-faire leadership styles on academic staff turnover intentions. The study hypotheses were derived from the stated objectives. H<sub>02</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya; H<sub>02a</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between autocratic leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya; H<sub>02b</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between democratic leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya; H<sub>02c</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. The study was anchored on Lewin Kurt model of leadership and the Harvard model of HRM. The study was anchored on positivism research philosophy and a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The population of the study was 17210 academic staff in Kenya chartered universities from whom a sample of 364 academic staff was drawn. A multistage sampling technique was used. Data was collected using a questionnaire. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Data were presented using tables, charts, and graphs. A pilot study was conducted amongst 37 respondents from Meru University to test the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Reliability was established through the use of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The findings of the study contributed to theory, policy-making, and HRM practices.

**Keywords:** Leadership Styles: Autocratic, Democratic, Laissez-Faire, Academic Staff, Turnover Intentions.

## **1. Introduction**

The adoption of relevant human resource management (HRM) strategies in organisations may be constrained by the leadership system in place as exercised by top management, unit, functional level, and first-line management. An important component of leadership that may influence the adoption of employee-centred HRM practices is the leadership style exercised by managers at various levels of organizational hierarchy. Leadership style introduces diversity in the manner in which managers apply HRM practices in such a way that it can explain employee behavioural outcomes. Mbah and Ikemefuna (2011) Puni et al. (2016) assert that autocratic leadership style is one of the main reasons for high employee turnover intentions in an organisation. Further, they point out that the autocratic leadership style is antagonistic thus creating a conflicting relationship between a leader and subordinates which can cause dissatisfaction and resentments. Cherry, (2018) study is of the view that the most significant reason why people quit their job and leave the organisation is because of the leadership style adopted. Employees who remain working with an autocratic leader have job dissatisfaction, lower commitment, psychological distress, and subsequently high turnover intentions. Additionally, strict employee supervision acts as an extrinsic factor and a “dissatisfier” as well as a “demotivator” to employees. Tian & Huang (2014) affirm that incompetent autocratic leadership style results in high levels of stress, low commitment, job dissatisfaction, and high employee turnover intentions. However, the democratic leadership style and laissez-faire leadership style make employees feel more valued and engaged which results in reduced turnover intentions (Puni *et al.*, 2016). Due to the potential impact of the application of different leadership styles on HRM practices and the emergent employee behaviours, this study proposes to measure this impact by examining the effect of leadership styles on academic staff turnover intentions in chartered universities in Kenya.

Leadership is the process of influencing the behaviour of others to achieve results (Armstrong & Taylor, 2017). leadership style refers to the patterns of behaviour, assumptions, attitude or traits exhibited by an individual attempting to provide leadership to achieve the desired result (Yukl, 1989). Leadership style is an approach used by managers to exercise their leadership function in the organisation. Therefore in a globally competitive and challenging environment, an effective leadership style is necessary to reduce employee attrition (Hassan, 2014). The leadership style involves the leader setting goals to be achieved, coming up with action plans, and directing the followers through feedback that informs the achievement of the set goals (Ogalo, 2013). Styles that leaders may adopt vary. Lewin Kurt (1939) identified three such leadership styles formulated around decision-making authority which consists of autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style, and laissez faire leadership style.

Leaders, who adopt the autocratic leadership style dictate work methods, do not consult, make unilateral decisions, do not share opinions, and limit employee participation (Puni *et al.*, (2016). This type of leadership style is less creative. It creates a permanent state of tension and discontent, resistance, and decreased leaders' interest in the subordinates (Tian & Huang (2014). Autocratic leadership is executed through punishment, threats, demands, orders, command, rules, and regulations. Democratic leaders are characterized by collective decision-making, camaraderie, active follower involvement, fair praise, and restrained criticism. They facilitate

collective decision-making (Cherry, 2018). The laissez-faire leadership behaviour attracts leaders who are comfortable with having minimum input in decision making although they are still responsible for the outcome of the decision made (Dessler & Starke 2017). It is the type of leadership style where leaders refuse to make decisions, are not available when needed, and choose to take no responsibility for their lack of leadership ability (Cherry, 2018). Laissez-faire leadership style is characterized by very little guidance from leaders, complete freedom for followers, provision of the tools and resources needed. The group members are expected to solve problems on their own, power is handed over to the followers and yet leaders take responsibility for the group decisions and actions. According to Tannerbaum and Schmidt (2009) leadership style varies along a continuum which has manager-centred behaviour, referred to as autocratic leadership style on the one end and subordinate-centred behaviour referred to as laissez-faire leadership style on the other end. They argued that leadership styles can be located at points along such a continuum.

Research has shown that leadership styles have a direct influence on employees' turnover intentions (Bohn, 2002, Cherry, 2018). As Siew (2017) explained, leadership style affects turnover intentions. Puni *et al.*, (2016) established that employees under autocratic leaders are more prone to employee turnover intentions mainly as a result of the leader's over-emphasis on production other than the people dimension. Workers under a democratic leadership style are less likely to have turnover intentions due to the collective decision-making approach of the leader. Employees under laissez-faire leadership style lack direction, they are keen to blame each other for mistakes, refuse to accept personal responsibility, and produce low progress work leading to dissatisfaction, frustration, and turnover intentions. The application of different leadership styles raises implications for the philosophical orientation embraced by managers to obtain results through their human resources (HR). HRM has two distinct orientations: soft HRM and hard HRM orientations. The adoption of either approach or both is dependent on the leadership style embraced by the management. Keenoy (2017) pointed out that hard and soft HRM are complementary rather than mutually exclusive practices. The soft HRM approach is a modern humanistic orientation underpinning Hawthorne studies, McGregor theory Y, Harvard framework, Ohio state university considerations dimension of leadership behaviour, and democratic leadership style. This orientation treats employees as the most important resource in an organisation and a source of competitive advantage (Beer *et al.*, 1985; Walton, 1985; Guest, 2017). Individuals and their self-direction place commitment, trust, and self-regulated behaviour at the Centre of any strategic approach to people (Guest, 2017). Practices of soft HRM approach, therefore, lead to lower absenteeism, lower labour turnover, and high employee retention (Guest, 2017). In contrast, the hard HRM is a traditional approach underpinning McGregor theory X, Michigan production centred supervision, and Ohio state university initiating structure and autocratic leadership style (Legge, 1995). Employees are treated simply as a resource of an organization like machines and buildings. Fombrun (1983) and Tichy (2015) noted that the Hard HRM orientation focused on the resource side of human resources that emphasized costs in the form of headcounts and procedural aspects of the HRM functions. The Hard HRM placed control firmly in the hands of management, and the HRM division role is to manage numbers effectively while keeping the workforce closely matched with requirements in terms of both bodies and

behaviours (Hendry & Pettigrew 2016). Leadership style may influence soft and hard HRM orientations, employee voice mechanisms, and turnover intentions. This study measured the effect of leadership style on academic staff turnover intentions.

## **2. Literature Review**

Leadership style is the pattern of behaviour that a leader exhibits, in influencing the followers or subordinates towards the goals of an organization. Leadership is the process of having a remarkable influence on subordinates in which they are motivated to achieve specified targets beyond what is expected and maintain cooperation for sustainable development Yukl (1994). Leadership is indispensable in business, political, educational, and social organizations for the attainment desired of goals. The interest in leadership research by organizational researchers particularly in leadership style started in 1945 with researchers of the Ohio State University. Researchers have mentioned several forms of leadership styles in the business arena. Autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles are the oldest and the most recognized leadership styles throughout the world. The combination of these three leadership styles further develops other leadership models like transformational, transactional, ethical, charismatic, and many others. The nature of leadership style influences employee turnover intentions, stay in an organization, and engagement in counterproductive work behaviour. Mbah and Ikemefuna (2011) argued that poor leadership style is a product of autocratic leadership style or production centred leadership flair which serves as one of the main important reasons why employees leave their jobs or resort to deviant behaviour, quit their jobs, and leave the organisation. Similarly, an antagonistic relationship between leaders and subordinates can cause employees to lose commitment and job satisfaction. CIPD (2019) is the view that one of the significant reasons why employee quit their job is the leadership style exercised in the organisation. Those who remain in their jobs working with leaders who exhibit undesirable leadership styles have job dissatisfaction, lower commitment, psychological distress, and subsequently high turnover intentions.

Puni, Agyemang, and Asamoah (2016) examined the relationship between leadership style, employee turnover intentions, and counter-productive work behaviour using a cross-sectional survey design. Purposively sampling was used. Data were analyzed using an inter-correlation matrix to establish the relationship between the study variables. The findings of the study showed a significant positive association between autocratic leadership style and employee turnover intentions, and counterproductive work behaviour. It also revealed a significant negative correlation between democratic leadership styles, employee turnover intentions, and counterproductive work behaviour. This study was done in Ghana and it showed the general relationship among leadership style, employee turnover intentions, and counter-productive work behaviour. The moderating effect of leadership style was not established. It used purposive sampling against superior probability sampling. The study was also a case study done in only one bank and therefore limiting the scope of the study and generalization of the findings.

Liu, Cai, Li, Shi, and Fang (2013) researched leadership style and employee turnover intentions. Data was collected from firms in both Shenzhen and Hong Kong. A hierarchical regression

model was used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that democratic leadership style has a significant moderating effect on employee turnover intentions. The study established the linkage between leadership style and employee turnover intentions; however, the moderating application of leadership styles is not well articulated. The study was contextualized in Asia. The study analyzed only democratic leadership styles on turnover intentions and left out autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles which are included in the current study. Babalola, Stouten, and Euwema (2016) examined the frequency of the moderating interaction between ethical leadership and turnover intentions in Nigeria. Interview schedules were used in data collection. Results from 124 employees, coworkers, and supervisors revealed that ethical leadership moderated the relationship between frequent change and turnover intentions such that the relationship was positive only when ethical leadership was low. The moderating relationship could be shown to be mediated by employees' state of self-esteem. The study was based in Nigeria and has shown the moderating relationship between ethical leadership and employee turnover intentions. However, it has not highlighted the moderating relationship between democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles as premised under the current study.

Albert, Collins, and Salase (2016) examined the relationship between leadership style, employee turnover intentions, and counterproductive work behaviour using a cross-sectional survey design. Purposively sampling was done. Data were analyzed using an inter-correlation matrix to establish the relationship between the study variables. The result showed a significant positive association between autocratic leadership style, employee turnover intentions, and counterproductive work behaviour but exposed a significant negative connection between democratic leadership styles, employee turnover intentions, and counterproductive work behaviour. Laissez-faire leadership style indicated a significant negative relationship with turnover intentions but a significant positive correlation with counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) implying that subordinates under laissez-faire leaders will show fewer turnover intentions but more CWBs due to the apathetic attitude shown by the leader. Employees under autocratic leaders are more prone to CWBs and intentions to quit jobs mainly as a result of the leaders' over-emphasis on production than people. Workers under a democratic leadership style are less likely to involve in turnover intentions and CWBs due to the collective decision-making approach of the leader. The study recommends leadership training in team building and participatory decision-making to minimize employee turnover intentions and CWBs. Overall, no single style of leadership style can suit different situations. Based on the situation and needs of the employee and organization, a leader can combine one or more leadership styles in influencing followers towards the desired goals of the organization. Thus, choosing the right leadership style, in the right situation, at the right time is the key to successful leadership. The autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership style is fundamental leadership approaches in Lewin's leadership framework, 1939. Thus every leader employs these three leadership styles in the leading process. However, the extent of these leadership styles may differ from each other (Cherry, 2019). That is why these three leadership styles belong to the same continuum. Therefore this study focused on investigating the effect of leadership style on academic staff turnover intentions.

### **3. Method**

The study was guided by positivism research philosophy. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design using quantitative approaches that is the measurement of weights of the responses given by the respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2018). A descriptive cross-sectional survey research studies large populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence, distribution, and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). A descriptive cross-sectional research design enabled the study to establish the relationship between leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in Kenyan chartered universities. The descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used because the parameters of a phenomenon were picked at a specific time to accurately capture the characteristics of the population relating to what, where, how, and when of the research topic (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). This design was adopted because the parameters of the phenomenon and the existing data among universities were collected at a specific single point in time and the results generalized to represent the entire population of the study. The descriptive cross-sectional design allowed for the description of relationships between variables under study which enabled the study to collect and compare several variables in the study at the same time. The research design has been used in previous studies by Abigail (2018), Nkari (2015), Kombo (2015), and Mucheke (2013).

### **4. Sample Size**

The primary data for the research was obtained from a sample of chartered university academic staff in the rank of professor, senior lecturer, lecturer, assistant lecturer, and teaching assistants. The multistage sampling technique was used to identify sampling units at different stages according to the structure of the population. This sampling approach involved the use of probability sampling techniques at several stages. Kilika, K'obonyo, Ogutu, and Munyoki (2012), Mitalo (2018) also used a similar approach in their studies. Four multistage sampling techniques were adopted in this study. The first stage involved the selection of fifteen (15) chartered universities from which the sample of academic staff was drawn. As of January 2020, there were 49 chartered universities in Kenya consisting of 31 public chartered universities and 18 private chartered universities. The list of chartered universities is presented in appendix VIII (CUE, 2020). Bryman and Bell (2018) indicated that for a study that includes target populations with five or more subgroups to be studied, the survey should only target 30 per cent of the population to enable a detailed examination of the population. To get the required sample of academic staff in the public and private chartered universities, the study took 30% of 49 chartered universities which produced more than 30% of the population. A simple random proportionate sampling method was then used to get the number of public and private chartered universities. A total of 15 chartered universities out of 49 public and private chartered universities which were 30% of all chartered universities was selected comprising of 9 public chartered universities and six (6) private chartered universities on a prorated basis. The second stage involved the selection of public and private chartered universities from which academic staff was sampled per region. The 8 regions of Kenya are Coast Region, North Eastern Region, Eastern Region, Central Region, Rift Valley Region, Nyanza Region, Western Region, and

Nairobi Region. To get the required universities per region from which a sample of academic staff was drawn, the study again used a simple random proportionate sampling technique.

The distribution of public and private chartered universities from which the sample of academic staff is drawn per region is shown by the sampling matrix in Table 1.

Table 1: Sampling Matrix

Region	Public chartered universities	Private chartered universities	Number to be sampled in Public chartered universities	Number to be sampled in Private chartered universities	Total Number to be Sampled in both Public and Private chartered universities
Nairobi	6	10	2	3	5
Coast	3	-	1	-	1
Rift Valley	6	2	2	1	3
Central	4	2	1	1	2
Eastern	5	2	2	1	3
Nyanza	4	2	1	-	1
Western	2	-	1	-	1
North Eastern	1	-	-	-	-
Total	31	18	9	6	15

Source: Researcher, (2020)

The third stage involved the selection of the sample from the study population of academic staff in fifteen (15) chartered universities. The total number of academic staff from the fifteen 15 chartered universities in Kenya is 6893 comprising of 4993 academic staff in 9 public chartered universities and 1900 in 6 private chartered universities. The sample size was obtained using an easy sample size calculator by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) whereby using a population size of 7,000, a sample size of 364 respondents was appropriate to achieve a confidence level of 95 percent and 5% margin of error. The easy sample size calculator by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The study then used a proportionate sampling technique to apportion the sample size of 364 respondents to every university. The summary of the distribution of the sample in the 15 selected universities is shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Distribution of the Sample in the Universities

University	Population	Sample
Dedan Kimathi University of Technology	482	25
Kenyatta University	1,702	89
Egerton University	570	30
Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology	453	24
Chuka University	270	14
Pwani University	171	9
Technical University of Kenya	616	33
University of Eldoret	313	17
Kisii University	416	22
United States International University	287	15
Africa Nazarene University	166	9
KCA University	238	13
Kabarak University	315	16
Mount Kenya University	694	37
Kenya Methodist University	200	11
Grand Total	6893	364

Source: Researcher, (2020)

The fourth stage involved the selection of the academic staff from academic ranks of professor, senior lecturer, lecturer, assistant lecturer/tutorial fellow, and teaching assistants. The study allocated the sample of 364 respondents proportionately to each of the 15 selected universities as tabulated in Table 2. Then stratified random sampling technique was used to select desired respondents from each academic rank. The serial number of each participant in an academic rank will be written on a piece of paper and placed in a basket. The basket was shaken, one paper picked at a time and the number on the paper noted. This was repeated until the desired number in every academic rank was achieved. If a paper that had already been picked was picked again the paper was folded and returned in the basket.

## 5. Descriptive Statistics

Data were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation of autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles.

### 5.1 Descriptive Statistics on Autocratic Leadership Style

The autocratic leadership style was conceived as the manager retaining as much power and decision-making authority as possible, unilaterally exercising all decision-making authority, controlling rewards, and using punishment as a motivator. Autocratic leaders place a high value on rules and regulations and rewards and punishment as motivators, and their subordinates follow the leader's orders without question. According to the literature reviewed, certain statements capture indicators of autocratic leadership style. The respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed with several statements concerning the autocratic leadership style. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 2:  
Descriptive Statistics on Autocratic Leadership Style

Statements	Statistic		
	N	Mean	S.D
Management has a firm grip on all decisions	353	3.70	1.172
Management makes unilateral decisions	353	3.38	1.162
Management rarely invites employees contributions	353	3.05	1.245
Management allows little or no decisions inputs by employees	353	2.97	1.245
Management imposes penalties and punishment on employees	353	2.91	1.137
Performance obtained through the use of fear, threat, and punishment	353	2.58	1.241
Management always criticizes employees.	353	2.54	1.238
Communications take the form of clear orders from top to bottom.	353	3.45	1.208
Management creates a rigid organisational structure and works environment.	353	3.14	1.237
Management controls every activity in the University	353	3.26	1.194
Aggregate score	353	3.10	1.208

Note. N: Frequency; SD: Standard deviation

Source: Primary Data, (2021)

The result presented in Table 3 shows the autocratic leadership style aggregate(*mean = 3.10 and SD = 1.208*). The average scores of items ranged between 2.54 and 3.70 (Range = 1.16). The perception that Management has a firm grip on all decisions rated the highest (mean score=3.70 and SD=1.172), followed by communications, takes the form of clear orders from top to bottom (mean score=3.45 and SD=1.208). The lowest rated was Management always criticizes employees (mean score=2.54and 1.238). The aggregate standard deviation is within the range of items in the questionnaire, which can be attributed to the reliability of the selected indicators. The findings imply that academic staff was neutral toward agreeing on the existence and application of autocratic leadership style by the Management of universities in Kenya.

### 5.2 Descriptive Statistics on Democratic Leadership Style

The democratic leadership style was conceived in terms of the decision-making power and authority derived from followers. Through participation in the formulation of policies that serve as guidelines for the organization's functioning, a leader considers the wishes and recommendations of followers (Hackman and Johnson, 1996) Selected statements to capture indicators of democratic leadership style according to the literature reviewed. The respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed with several statements about democratic leadership. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 3:  
Descriptive Statistics on Democratic Leadership Style

Statements	Statistic		
	N	Mean	SD
Employees are invited to contribute to the decision making	353	2.756	1.169
Employee input is sought before decisions are made	353	2.789	1.167
Employees are motivation through intrinsic rewards	353	3.037	1.173
Employees are allowed to ask questions	353	3.118	1.159
Employees are allowed to give suggestions on important issues	353	3.060	1.148
Management by Walking around (MBWA).	353	2.954	1.164
aggregate score	353	2.95	1.163

Note. N: Frequency; SD: Standard deviation  
Source: Primary Data, (2021)

The result in Table 4 indicated the democratic leadership style aggregate(*mean = 2.95 and SD = 1.163*). The standard deviation is within those of other items in the questionnaire and showed that academic staff varied much on autocratic leadership style in universities in Kenya. This implies that on average academic staff were neutral on the existence and application of democratic leadership style by Management of universities in Kenya. Meaning that they were neutral on employees participating in decision-making in the universities leading to high turnover intentions. The standard deviation was 1.163, which showed that academic staff varied much on their autocratic leadership style in universities in Kenya.

### 5.3 Descriptive Statistics on Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

Laissez-faire leadership style was conceived in terms of leader shuns decision-making as much as possible, avoids communication, and communicates when needed. Maintain a low profile, respect all divisions within the organization, and work with whatever structure without suggestions or criticisms. Selected statements capture indicators of Laissez-faire leadership style according to the literature reviewed. The respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agreed with selected statements about the Laissez-faire leadership style. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 4:  
Descriptive Statistics on Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

Statements	Statistic		
	N	Mean	S.D
Commensurate authority delegated	353	2.98	1.157
participation and consultation	353	3.06	1.128
Develop options and decide actions	353	2.97	1.132
Complete freedom to the employee	353	2.56	1.240
Aggregate score	353	2.56	1.240

Note. N: Frequency; SD: Standard deviation  
Source: Primary Data, (2021)

The result presented in Table 5 revealed that Laissez-faire leadership style aggregate (mean = 2.56, and SD = 1.240 ). The average scores of items ranged between 2.44 and 2.97 (Range = 0.53). The perception on Participation and consultation rated the highest (mean score=2.97 and SD=1.31), followed by Commensurate authority delegated (mean score=2.85 and SD=1.27). The rated lowest was that Complete freedom was given to the employee (mean score=2.44 and 1.25). The aggregate standard deviation is within the items in the questionnaire, which can be attributed to the reliability of the selected indicators. As a result, the average scores of each item were close to each other, averaging the aggregate standard deviation. The findings imply that academic staff disagreed on the existence and application of the Laissez-faire leadership style. Meaning that they disagreed with leaders shunning decision-making, avoiding communication but communicating when needed, maintaining a low profile, respecting all divisions within the organization, living and working with whatever structure put in place without any suggestions or criticism.

### 6. Correlation of Leadership Styles and Turnover Intentions

The second objective of the study sought to examine the effect of leadership style on the academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. Leadership styles were conceptualized in the study with three leadership styles comprising autocratic leadership styles, democratic leadership styles, and laissez-faire leadership styles. To assess the relationships between leadership styles (moderating variables) and academic staff turnover intentions (dependent variable) a correlation analysis was conducted. The Pearson’s Product Moment correlation technique was used to determine the relationship between indicators of leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. It was meant to identify the strength and direction of the relationships between indicators of these variables. Results of correlation were presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Correlations between Leadership Style and Turnover Intentions

		Turnover Intentions	Autocratic	Democratic	Laissez-faire	Leadership Style
Turnover Intentions	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	352				
Autocratic	Pearson Correlation	.191**	1			

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	352	353			
Democratic	Pearson	-.177**	-.062	1		
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.242			
	N	352	353	353		
Laissez	Pearson	-.226**	-.141**	.657**	1	
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.008	.000		
	N	352	353	353	353	
Leadership	Pearson	-.030	.638**	.684**	.574**	1
Styles	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.580	.000	.000	.000	
	N	352	353	353	353	353

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data, (2021)

The correlation results presented in Table 6 showed that autocratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions are positive and significantly correlated ( $r = 0.191, p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). This suggests that academic staff turnover intentions are increased by the use of autocratic leadership style in the universities in Kenya. Democratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions are depicted to be negative and significantly correlated ( $r = -0.177, p = 0.001 < 0.01$ ). This suggests that academic staff turnover intentions are reduced by the increase in the use of democratic leadership styles by the management of chartered universities in Kenya. Further, laissez-faire leadership style was indicated to be negative and significantly correlated with academic staff turnover intention ( $r = -0.226, p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). This correlation depicted that academic staff turnover intention was reduced by the increase in the use of laissez-faire leadership style.

## 7. Regression of Leadership Styles and Academic Staff Turnover Intentions

The second objective of the study was to examine the effect of leadership styles on academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. The leadership style was conceived in terms of autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style, and laissez-faire leadership style. Leadership styles are measured along a continuum that has manager-centred behaviour, referred to as autocratic-leadership style on the one end, and subordinate-centred behaviour referred to as laissez-faire leadership style on the other end. Respondents had been asked to indicate the extent to which the leadership styles existed in the universities in Kenya.

To assess the effect of leadership styles on academic staff turnover intentions, the following hypothesis was set:  $H_{01}$

$H_{01}$ : There is no statistically significant relationship between leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya

H0<sub>1a</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between autocratic leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya

H0<sub>1b</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between democratic leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya

H0<sub>1c</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya.

To test Hypothesis H0<sub>1a</sub>, H0<sub>1b</sub>, and H0<sub>1c</sub>: a simple regression analysis was carried out against academic staff turnover intentions and leadership styles namely autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style, and laissez-faire leadership style as the predictor variable. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Regression: Autocratic Leadership style, Democratic Leadership style and Laissez-faire Leadership style predicting academic staff turnover intentions

Statistics	Autocratic Leadership style	Democratic Leadership style	Laissez faire Leadership style
R	0.226	0.177	0.226
R <sup>2</sup>	0.051	0.031	0.051
F	18.884	11.294	18.884
Sig(p-value)	0.022	0.001	0.000
constant	1.742	3.177	3.310
Sig(p-value)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Regression coefficient	0.263	-0.209	-0.260
S.E error	0.072	0.062	0.060
t-test	3.639	-3.361	3.310
Sig(p-value)	0.000	0.001	0.000
Beta	-0.191	-0.177	-0.226

Source: Primary Data, (2021)

The regression results for autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style, and laissez-faire leadership style had  $R^2 = 0.051, 0.031$  and  $0.051$  respectively for each dimension of leadership styles as presented in Table 7. The results imply that autocratic leadership style and laissez-faire leadership style accounted for 5.1% each while democratic leadership style, accounted for 3.1% variation in academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. The remaining variation is explained by other variables not included in this study like personal factors, demographical factors, level of employment in the country, and labour mobility. The results showed that the effect of the autocratic leadership style is statistically significant (18.884, p-value=.022), democratic leadership style (11.294, p-value=.001), working conditions (18.884, p-value=.000) at 5% level. This implied that the suggested models are suitable for prediction purposes.

### 7.1 Regression of autocratic Leadership Style and Academic Turnover Intentions

The first sub-objective sought to investigate the relationship between autocratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. To determine the relationship

between autocratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions, the following null hypothesis was formulated.

*H0<sub>1a</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya.* Results presented in Table 7 indicate a statistically significant positive linear relationship between autocratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions (regression coefficient = 0.263, p = 0.000 < 0.05) at a 5% level. This means that one unit increase in autocratic leadership style leads to a significant increase in academic staff turnover intentions by a factor of 0.263. The null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya is not supported in the current study. This means that the autocratic leadership style has a positive significant influence on academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. Further, it implies that autocratic leadership style positively influences academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya.

Based on these results, the regression model for the prediction of academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya can be stated as follows:

Y  
= 1.742 + 0.191X<sub>1a</sub> ..... (1)

Where;

Y= The dependent variable (the academic staff turnover intentions)

X<sub>1a</sub> =Autocratic leadership style

1.742 = y –Intercept (constant). Estimate of the expected value of academic staff turnover intention when autocratic leadership style is Zero (Constant).

0.191 = an estimate of the expected increase in academic staff turnover intentions in response to a unit increase (improvements) in autocratic leadership style(X<sub>1a</sub>).

The conclusion arrived at in this hypothesis can be explained on several grounds. First, in terms of concern for the current study, the findings of the study bring out the role of autocratic leadership style in academic staff turnover intentions. The researcher observed that the findings raise an implication pointing at the relevance of autocratic leadership style in stimulating employee turnover intentions pointed out by Kurt Lewin Leadership Model (Lewin et al., 1939). This is supported by the descriptive statistics which showed that on average academic staff were neutral that management in the universities adopted and applied autocratic leadership style in handling employees, achieving results, exercising authority and control, and in decision making with an aggregate(mean = 3.10, SD = 1.208). Second, from the theoretical literature, the study used the postulates of the Kurt Lewin Leadership Model (Lewin et al., 1939) which identified three dimensions of leadership style formulated around decision-making authority. The autocratic leader dictates work methods, does not consult, makes unilateral decisions, does not share opinions, and limits employee participation (Robbins & Coulter, 2009). This leadership style is less creative, determining a permanent state of tension and discontent, resistance, and decreasing leaders' interest in subordinates' interests (Raus & Haita, 2011). Autocratic leadership style is gained through punishment, threat, demands, orders, rules, and regulations. This behaviour may result in quick decision-making in times of stress and solid deadlines for the

completion of tasks set by the leader. However, the downside of utilizing such a leadership style is that it stifles creativity to problem-solving which ultimately decreases job satisfaction and the performance of the employee. It also leads to resentment among team members and towards the leader which may result in rebellion and high staff turnover (Lewin, 1939). Lastly, the findings of this study were consistent with study findings by Albert et al., (2016), Puni et al., (2016), and Liu et al., (2013) who found a significant positive association between autocratic leadership style and employee turnover intentions. This means that autocratic leadership style will lead to high dissatisfaction and individual who are not satisfied with their jobs are expected to think of leaving the organization, which result in turnover intentions.

**7.2 Regression of Democratic Leadership Style and Academic Turnover Intentions**

The second sub-objective sought to investigate the relationship between autocratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. To determine the relationship between democratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions, the following null hypothesis H0<sub>2b</sub> was formulated.

*H0<sub>1b</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between democratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya.*

Results presented in Table 7 indicated a statistically significant positive linear relationship between democratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions (regression coefficient = -0.209, p = 0.000 < 0.05) at a 5% level. This means that one unit increase in democratic leadership style leads to a significant decrease in academic staff turnover intentions by a factor of 0.209. The null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between democratic leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya is not supported in the current study. This means that the democratic leadership style has a negative and significant influence on academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. Further, it implies that democratic leadership style negatively influences academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. Based on these results, the regression model for the prediction of academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya can be stated as follows:

Y = 3.177 - 0.177X<sub>1b</sub> ..... 2)

Where;

Y= The dependent variable (the academic staff turnover intentions)

X<sub>1b</sub> = democratic leadership style

3.177 = Y -Intercept (constant). Estimate of the expected value of academic staff turnover intention when democratic leadership style is Zero (Constant).

-0.177 = An estimate of the expected decrease in academic staff turnover intentions for a unit increase (improvements) in democratic leadership style (X<sub>1b</sub>).

The conclusion arrived at in this hypothesis can be explained on several grounds. First, in terms of concern for this study, the findings of this study bring out the importance of a democratic leadership style in reducing academic staff turnover intentions. The researcher observed that the

findings raise an implication pointing at the relevance of autocratic leadership style in reducing employee turnover intentions pointed out by Kurt Lewin Leadership Model (Lewin et al., 1939). This is supported by the descriptive statistics which showed that on average academic staff disagreed on democratic leadership style in respect to employee participation, decision making, questions, suggestions, intrinsic motivation, and rewards exhibited by management with an aggregate(*mean* = 2.95, *SD* = 1.163, *CV* = 39.50).

Second, from the theoretical literature, the study used the postulates of the Kurt Lewin Leadership Model (Lewin *et al.*, 1939) which identified three dimensions of leadership style formulated around decision-making authority. The democratic type of leadership style involves a leader who customarily consults his team members and considers their suggestions although the final decision lies with the leader (Dessler & Starke 2017). In this kind of leadership style, criticism is allowed and praise is given. The democratic leader encourages subordinates to identify problems and suggest solutions to overcome those problems (Amzat & Ali, 2011). Democratic leaders are characterized by collective decision-making, camaraderie, active follower involvement, fair praise, and restrained criticism. Democratic leadership style facilitates collective decision-making (Cherry, 2018). The use of a democratic leadership style results in higher quality and quantity, commitment to the goals, a sense of ownership, and a valued feeling of being a part of the team in the organisation (Lewin, 1939). This implies that a democratic leadership style can create feelings of satisfaction leading to reduced turnover intentions. Lastly, the findings of this study were consistent with study findings by Albert *et al.*, (2016), Puni *et al.*, (2016) who found a significant negative association between democratic leadership style and employee turnover intentions and Liu *et al.*, (2013) revealed that democratic leadership style has a significant moderating effect on employee turnover intentions and established the linkage between leadership style and employee turnover intentions, This means that democratic leadership style will lead to high job satisfaction and the individual who is not satisfied with their jobs are expected to stay in the same organization, which will lead to reduced turnover intentions.

### **7.3 Regression of Laissez-Faire Style and Academic Turnover Intentions**

The third sub-objective sought to investigate the relationship between Laissez-faire leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. To determine the relationship between Laissez-faire leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions, the following null hypothesis  $H_{0c}$  was.

$H_{0c}$ : *There is no statistically significant relationship between Laissez-faire leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya.* Results presented in Table 7 revealed a statistically significant positive linear relationship between laissez-faire leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions (*regression coefficient* = -0.260, *p* = 0.000 < 0.05) at a 5% level. This means that one unit increase in laissez-faire leadership styles leads to a significant decrease in academic staff turnover intentions by a factor of 0.209. The null hypothesis is that there is no statistically significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. is not supported in the current study. This means that laissez-faire leadership styles have a negative and significant relationship with academic staff

turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. Based on these results, the regression model for the prediction of academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya can be stated as follows

$$\begin{aligned}
Y & \\
&= 3.310 \\
&- 0.260X_{1c} \dots\dots\dots (3)
\end{aligned}$$

Where;

$Y$  = The dependent variable (the academic staff turnover intentions)

$X_{1c}$  = Laissez faire leadership styles

3.177 =  $Y$  – Intercept (constant). Estimate of the expected value of academic staff turnover intention when laissez-faire leadership styles are Zero (Constant).

–0.260 = An estimate of the expected decrease in academic staff turnover intentions for a unit increase (improvements) in laissez-faire leadership styles ( $X_{1c}$ )

The conclusion arrived at in this hypothesis can be explained on several grounds. First, in terms of concern for this study, the findings of this study bring out the importance of laissez-faire leadership styles in reducing academic staff turnover intentions. The researcher observed that the findings raise an implication pointing at the relevance of the laissez-faire leadership style in reducing employee turnover intentions pointed out by Kurt Lewin Leadership Model (Lewin et al., 1939). This is supported by the descriptive statistics which showed that on average academic staff disagreed with the existence and use of laissez-faire leadership style with an aggregate (mean = 2.56, SD = 1.240). This implies that the laissez-faire leadership style has not yet been adopted and used in universities.

Second, from the theoretical literature, the study used the postulates of the Kurt Lewin Leadership Model (Lewin et al., 1939) which identified three dimensions of leadership style formulated around decision-making authority. The laissez-faire leadership style attracts leaders that are comfortable with having minimum input in the decision-making process although they are responsible for the outcome of the decision made by the followers (Dessler & Starke 2017). It is a leadership style where leaders refuse to make decisions, are not available when needed, and choose to take no responsibility for their lack of leadership ability (Cherry, 2018). Laissez-faire leadership is characterized by very little guidance from leaders, complete freedom for followers, leaders providing the tools and resources needed, and group members are expected to solve problems on their own. Power is handed over to followers and yet leaders still take responsibility for the groups' decisions and actions. This leadership style allows for the development of critical thinking skills as well as group problem solving (Dessler & Starke 2017). This implies that laissez-faire leadership styles leadership style can create feelings of satisfaction leading to reduced turnover intentions

The findings of this study were consistent with the studies by Albert et al., (2016), Puni et al., (2016), and Liu et al., (2013) who found a significant positive association between laissez-faire leadership style and employee turnover intentions. Mumtaz et al., (2018) found a strong positive

correlation between employee-boss relations and employee turnover. Lastly, the observations drawn above contribute to bridging the knowledge gaps identified in chapter two of the current study. The studies by Albert *et al.*, (2016), Puni *et al.*, (2016), and Liu *et al.*, (2013) found a significant positive association between laissez-faire leadership style and employee turnover intentions. However, purposive sampling yield a non-probability sample which resulted in biased data and findings. This calls for an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon. Further, the data collected in these studies were analyzed using descriptive statistics did not establish the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables under study. To get reliable information on turnover, data should be collected from those who have exited employment and analyzed using appropriate techniques like correlation and regression. Autocratic leadership style leads to increased turnover intentions while democratic leadership style and laissez-faire leadership styles lead to reduced turnover intentions. Therefore management of universities should adopt leadership styles that lead to reduced turnover intentions.

## **8. Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of leadership styles on academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. The specific objectives were to: establish the effect of employee leadership styles on academic staff turnover intentions; examine the effect of autocratic leadership style on academic staff turnover intentions; investigate the effect of employee democratic leadership style on academic staff turnover intentions and finally assess the effect of laissez-faire leadership styles on academic staff turnover intentions. Hypotheses two were there is no statistically significant relationship between autocratic leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya: There is no statistically significant relationship between democratic leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya: There is no statistically significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership styles and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. The study explained the conclusions arrived at using the descriptive statistics obtained on the indicators for leadership styles, Kurt model of leadership and previous researchers. From the descriptive results on leadership styles, the study noted that academic staff agreed that management of the universities adopted autocratic leadership leading to turnover intentions. Equally, they disagreed that democratic and laissez-faire were used in the universities. Based on the findings of this study, this research concluded that when each leadership style is practised in exclusion of other leadership styles, Autocratic leadership style positively influences academic staff turnover intentions, democratic leadership style negatively influences academic staff turnover intentions, and laissez-faire leadership negatively influences academic staff turnover intention. However, aggregate leadership styles do not influence academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. This study also concluded that the leadership styles practiced by management in the universities encouraged academic turnover intentions. The Government, universities Council and Management hire and train universities managers on leadership styles particularly democratic

leadership styles and laissez-faire leadership styles that significantly reduce academic staff turnover intentions.

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