



Stoic Leadership and Employee Performance: The Mediating Role of Employee Commitment

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Abstract

Despite the fact that for thousands of years, Stoics have not only been leaders but also role models for other leaders, it is surprising that stoicism remains little researched in leadership studies. The aim of this study was to assess the relationship between stoic leadership and employee performance and determine the mediating role of employee commitment on the relationship. Specifically, the study assessed the effect of stoic leadership (SL) on employee performance (EP) and determined the mediating role of employee commitment (EC) on the relationship between SL and EP. The study used explanatory and cross-sectional research designs. The target population for the study comprised of 948 employees from four of the largest companies in Nakuru City, Kenya, from which 155 workers were sampled used stratified random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires. Findings showed a significant and positive effect of SL ($b = 0.68$, $t = 13.78$, $p < 0.0001$) on EP. Both affective and normative commitments mediated the relationship between SL and EP but not continuance commitment. The study concluded that stoic virtues could engender a sense of fairness, participatory leadership and gratitude, leading to development of both AC and NC but not CC. This study recommends that leaders in organizations should implement the principles of stoic leadership, which could lead to better employee outputs.

Subject Areas

Sociology

Keywords

Stoic Leadership (SL), Employee Commitment (EC), Employee Performance (EP)

1. Introduction

Employee performance is critical for the overall success of an organisation, society, and even, nation. An organisation consists of several resources, such as technology, capital, materials and human resources/employees. Of these, human resource is the most important because it determines the way other resources. Moreover, it's the only one that is perfectly inimitable [1] [2]. According to DuBrin [3], employee performance is the use of knowledge, skills, experiences and abilities, to perform the assigned mission required by their managers efficiently and effectively. On the other hand, McCloy *et al.* [4] defined employee performance as the employees' behaviours or actions, which are aligned to the aims or goals of an organization. This study adopts Sultana *et al.* [5] conceptualization of employee performance as the ability of an employee to achieve a specified task measured against predetermined standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed. Employee performance is an indication of how a worker's specific activities contribute in attainment of organizational goals.

Employee performance could be contingent on the style of leadership at the workplace. A Gallup [6] worldwide survey found that because of poor leadership, only a tiny 13% of an organization's workforce was actively committed to their job while the rest either worked perfunctorily (63%) or undermined their firm (24%). Riaz *et al.* [7] reported that the type of leadership style affects the level of employees' commitment, which is critical in keeping them satisfied and motivated. Similarly, Teshome [8] concluded that employee commitment and leadership style were the central factors influencing organization performance. Consequently, good leadership is a key ingredient in bridging the colossal gulf between the potential and achieved talent and energy of a firm's workers.

Although the concept of leadership is as old as humanity itself, a universally accepted definition remains elusive, with scholars proposing almost as many definitions of leadership as there are researchers who have sought to understand and explain the phenomenon [9]. Generally, leadership involves influencing other individuals to act towards the attainment of a goal or goals. This study conceptualizes leadership as the process of influencing people in the same direction through mostly noncoercive means [10]-[13]. Most studies on the relationship between leadership and commitment have recognized and investigated three major leadership styles: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire [14]-[17]. Scant attention has been paid to an ancient philosophy that offers practical advice for a virtuous and eudaemonic life: stoic leadership. Attributed to the teachings of a Greek philosopher, Zeno, in the third century B.C., stoicism could help business executives to manage the emotional stress and leadership challenges associated with high-octane competitive business *milieu* [18]. Gambhir [19] argued that the philosophy could help individuals build resilience and become better leaders. Aytekin [20] suggested that stoicism could be valuable to leaders in setting priorities, curbing stress, practicing time management, and managing fear. Few studies have explored the relationship between stoic leadership and employee performance.

Employee commitment (EC) is one of the salient antecedents in an organisation's success [21]. Allen and Meyer [22] defined employee commitment as "the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organisation". Armstrong [23] conceptualized EC as being akin to organizational citizenship; comprising of three facets: a strong desire to remain a member of the organization; a strong belief in, and acceptance of the values and goals of the organization; and a readiness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization. Employee commitment has been found to reduce withdrawal behaviour (such as lateness, absenteeism, and turnover), increase job satisfaction and fulfilment, leading to improved OP [24]-[26]. A paucity of studies has investigated the possible mediating role of employee commitment (EC) on the relationship between stoic leadership (SL) and employee performance (EP).

The general objective of this study was to assess the relationship between stoic leadership and employee performance and determine the mediating role of employee commitment on the relationship. Specifically, the study focused on the following research objectives: 1) to assess the effect of stoic leadership on employee performance; and 2) determine the mediating role of EC on the relationship between SL and EP.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Employee Performance

One of the most important factors affecting the overall performance of an organization is employee performance. According to DuBrin [3] employee performance is the use of knowledge, skills, experiences and abilities, to perform the assigned mission required by their managers efficiently and effectively. Becker *et al.* [27] defines employee performance as how well the workers accomplish assigned tasks, arguing that employee performance must be measured according to the standards set by the organization. This study adopts Sultana *et al.*'s [5] conceptualization of employee performance as the ability of an employee to achieve a specified task measured against predetermined standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed.

It is generally accepted that employee performance is a construct with several dimensions. Armstrong [28], and Borman and Motowidlo [29] identified two dimensions of employee performance: behavioural or process and outcomes. The behavioural aspect of performance denotes actions that people engage in during their work while outcomes represent the consequences of one's job behaviour. Current researchers emphasize three dimensions of employee performance: task, contextual and adaptive performance [30] [31].

Task performance consists of explicit job behaviours, including core job responsibilities assigned as part of one's job description. The key determinants of this type of performance are one's cognitive ability facilitated through task knowledge (having the knowledge to the job), task skill (ability to apply technical knowledge to perform a task), and task habits (reflexive ability to respond to assigned jobs).

Consequently, the primary antecedents of task performance are the ability to do the job and prior experience. In an organization, task performance is a contractual agreement between a manager and a worker, for the latter to perform specific tasks [30].

Adaptive performance is the ability of employees to adapt their behaviour and attitudes to work in dynamic work situations. Adapted workers can continue to deliver even when the work environment is volatile and hostile, such as disruptive technological changes [32] [33]. According to Griffin *et al.* [34], the main antecedents of adaptive performance are one's adaptability and proactiveness.

Contextual performance or organization citizen behaviour (OCB) refers to the extra role behaviours (which are not stated in one's job description) or pro social behaviours that can enable one to carry out their duties more effectively. Coleman & Borman [35] describe this type of performance as a kind of attitude, where workers volunteer for extra work, help others to solve problems, show enthusiasm at work, cooperate with others, abide voluntarily with prescribed rules and regulations, and support decisions made by the organization. According to Bergeron [36] contextual performance itself consists of several dimensions, such as teamwork, determination and allegiance. Kahn [37] argued that engaged and committed employees work with a lot of passion, taking on extra roles, translating into higher firm performance.

2.2. Stoic Leadership

Stoicism is a school of philosophy founded by Zeno of Citium (Cyprus) in ancient Greece, circa 300 B.C.E. Unlike other contemporary philosophies, for instance, Epicureanism and Scepticism, that were more individualistic and contemplated the purpose and meaning of life, Stoicism is more than a philosophy; it was also a way of life, offering a practical guide to living virtuously [38]. The philosophy became dominant in the Hellenistic-Roman era because of its focus on the community, which served the political interests of the times [39]. The central plank of stoicism is the emphasis on reason, which can enable an individual understand the natural world (called *logos* in the philosophy) and free themselves from any emotional baggage [40]. The philosophy holds that internal values and thoughts can help a person overcome external hardships, enabling them to lead a happy and virtuous life. Consequently, the true concept of stoicism transcends its popular notion—that of a person who can endure pain and hardship without showing any emotion or complaining. Stoics, of course, experience emotion, but because of their understanding of the world, can put the emotions in perspective, accept reality, understand their reaction to them, and therefore, attenuate their reaction to them [41]. This study conceptualizes and defines the application of Stoic principles to leadership as Stoic leadership and investigates its effects on employee performance.

The ontological perspective of stoicism is that we ought to live a virtuous life (that is, ability to respond appropriately to whatever circumstance) that is in tune with nature, which is made possible by the practical application of the three major

principles: *ethics*, *physics*, and [42]. The principle of *ethics* demands that we should choose what is good for the society (that is, the common good) because we are in control of our own actions, thoughts, values, and beliefs [41] [43]. The principle of *physics* allows us to live a life which is in tune with nature, that is, acceptance of our place in the greater whole whereas the principle of *logic* enables us respond appropriately to circumstances through making rational choices [42].

To practice Stoicism, Epictetus [44] listed a triad of necessary disciplines: discipline of desire, action, and assent. The discipline of desire monitors passions, which when well exercised, lead to wisdom, good thinking, values and survival. Nonetheless, if individuals desire things that they have no control over, they will no longer live virtuously. The issue is not to forego desires, but to practice awareness of what is required to achieve the desires, especially those that are not in one's control [45] [46]. The discipline of action calls individuals to participate in the *logos* (as humans are social beings) while living virtuously [46] [47]. The purpose of the discipline of assent is to evaluate the first two disciplines (our inability to see things as they are, and taking inappropriate action, respectively) to prevent us from making impetuous judgements [44].

Stoicism emphasizes four primary virtues—practical wisdom, courage, temperance and justice—which were carry-overs of Plato's four virtues of ethics [48]. Wisdom results from the pursuit of knowledge and enables us to understand what is good and bad [41]. Wisdom is further subdivided into six secondary virtues: good judgement (acting advantageously), good practical overview (ability to understand a situation), quick moral sense (acting appropriately at the moment), discretion (ability to make wise choices), shrewdness (ability to attain a goal in every instance), and inventiveness in difficulties (ability to overcome difficulties [48]). Courage is the ability to stand up for what is right, in both the physical and moral sense of the word [49]. Courage consists of the secondary virtues of perseverance, confidence, magnanimity, mental stoutness, and industry [48]. Temperance demands moderation in everything, including emotions. The secondary virtues of temperance include good ordering, propriety, sense of honour, and self-control [47]. Justice is treating each other fairly and doing what is right for the benefit of the common good. Piety, kindness, sociability, and blameless companionship are the subordinate virtues of justice [48].

The Stoic virtues are at the heart of what good leaders should be [50] and yet, Stoicism has almost been ignored in the discourse of leadership scholarship. For thousands of years, the Stoics have not only been leaders, but the resource other leaders have turned to for advice and guidance. For example, some exceptional leaders, such as, the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius and United States President Teddy Roosevelt have practiced stoicism, with the latter carrying a text by Marcus Aurelius throughout his expeditions in South America. George Washington [the first president of the USA] quoted Cato (a Roman senator and Stoic) to spur his troops. John Adams (a former US president) declared Cicero (a Roman Stoic) as the greatest statesman and philosopher. Anderson [51] called stoicism as

the “philosophy for leadership”, noting its potential contribution to globalization and surviving tough times. Similarly, Gambhir [19] argued that the Stoic mindset is tailor-made for leadership because of its focus on humility, awareness and control of emotions. It creates mental toughness and provides tools to stay calm, get through crises, and transform unexpected obstacles into opportunities. Watson [42] opined that Stoicism with its focus on reflexivity, emotional control and wisdom could alter the ontological fulcrum of leadership from the current individualism to one more focused on the common good.

Hypothesis 1: Stoic leadership is positively related to employee performance.

2.3. Employee Commitment

Employee commitment has remained a focus of research in managerial science because of its potential to explain why employees remain dedicated to their organizations [52]. A common strand running through most conceptualizations of employee commitment is that of a force that glues an individual to an organization. For example, Armstrong [23] theorized that EC consisted of three elements: a passionate yearning to remain a member of the organization; a true believer and a practitioner of the values and goals of the organization; and a strong propensity to work assiduously for the organization. Meyer and Herscovitch [53] defined EC as a force that binds a person to a particular course of action. This study adopts Allen and Meyer’s [22] conceptualization of EC as “the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization”.

Employee commitment comprises of several dimensions, which could relate differently with work outcomes [54]. One of the most empirically scrutinized and generally supported models of EC is the three-dimensional dogma proposed by Allen and Meyer [22]. The components in the Allen and Meyer [22] model are affective, continuance, and normative commitment. In affective commitment (AC), employees remain in an organization because they desire to, believe in its goals and values, and are emotionally attached to the firm [22] [55]. In continuance commitment (CC), employees stay in an organization because the costs of leaving it are too high on account of investing too much in the firm or the lack of alternatives [22]. On the other hand, employees with strong normative commitment (NC) stay because it is the moral and ethical thing to do resulting from a feeling of gratitude to the organization and their upbringing as children [22].

Because of their attachment, identification and involvement in the organization [22], committed employees are likely to work harder leading to better employee performance. However, empirical findings have been ambivalent. Dariush *et al.* [17] contented that committed workers lend a competitive advantage to a firm because of their security and stability, leading to improved performance. Andrew [56] examined the effect of employees’ commitment (affective, normative and continuous) on organizational performance in Eravurpatru Divisional Secretariat, in Sri Lanka. Data were collected using five-point Likert-Type questionnaires, which were self-administered. The findings showed a strong, positive and signifi-

cant correlation between the three types of EC and OP. Chen and Francesco [57] examined the effects of the three types of EC (AC, NC, and CC) on organizational commitment and performance, using a sample of 253 employees in the People's Republic of China. Findings showed a positive correlation between AC and employee performance but CC was not. Moreover, NC moderated the relationship between AC and employee performance.

Admit and Fujie [58] examined the effect of leadership, employee commitment, and work motivation on employee performance in Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia. Data were collected using questionnaires from 195 sports office experts and analyzed using regression model and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results showed that EC had a significant and positive effect on employees' performance. Mathotaarachchi [59] reported that organizations with highly committed employees have superior performance in the long run. Stanley and Meyer [60] examined the relationship between the dimensions of employee commitment (AC, NC, and CC) and job performance, specifically task and citizenship behaviours. Affective commitment was found to have the strongest correlation with both task and citizenship behaviours, followed by NC whereas CC had either weak or no effect on job performance. The authors also noted that NC and CC could relate differently to performance depending on the strength of other dimensions. Cesário and Chambel [61] analyzed the relationship between employee commitment and work engagement on employee performance. The study used an EC scale and an almost real work performance measure in 274 Portuguese workers. Results showed that although employee engagement was significantly correlated with EP, affective, normative, and calculative commitments were not.

Most studies, in the foregoing section support the contention that employee commitment could influence employee performance.

Hypothesis 2: Employee commitment is positively related to employee performance.

A strong corpus of research has demonstrated the relationship between leadership and employee commitment. However, few studies have focused on SL. For instance, Hussein *et al.* [62] examined the mediating role of conflict management on the relationship between leadership styles and employee commitment among 110 employees working in the pharmaceutical industry in Kurdistan. Findings revealed that all the leadership styles investigated (transactional, transformational, and charismatic) significantly and positively influenced employee commitment. Biza and Irbo [63] examined the impact of leadership styles (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) on employee commitment among 231 members of academic staff in Madda Walabu University, Ethiopia. Transformational leadership was found to positively influence all the three types of EC (AC, CC, and NC). Transactional leadership weakly but positively affected both CC and NC but not AC. On the other hand, laissez-faire leadership had a significant and positive correlation with CC but no relationship with AC and NC. Mahfouz *et al.* [64] analyzed the mediating role of employee commitment on the relationship between

transformational leadership and employee performance among workers of construction firms in Jordan. Results showed that employee commitment partially mediated the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee performance.

Despite the fact that for thousands of years, Stoics have not only been leaders but also role models for other leaders, it is surprising that stoicism remains little researched. Given that stoicism could engender exceptional leaders, who are humble, wise, mentally tough, reflexive, and able to control their emotions [19] [42] [50] [51], stoic leadership could spawn committed employees. The major principles of stoic leadership could be beneficial at the workplace. The principle of ethics, in which a leader acts for the common good, rather than at the behest of their own inclinations could directly benefit employees [42]. The principle of logic could allow managers to make better and rational choices in the face of dynamic and unpredictable changes in the business *milieu* [41] [43]. The principle of physics could enable leaders understand that nothing is constant and what was once the whole can become a part of a different entity [42]. An acceptance of what is within one's control [ie. one's own behaviours, beliefs and actions] and what is outside of one's control [everything else]. On the other hand, studies by Hussein *et al.* [62], Biza and Irbo [63], Mahfouz *et al.* [64], and others showed that EC could affect EP. It therefore, follows that employee commitment could mediate the relationship between stoic leadership and employee performance.

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between stoic leadership and employee performance could be mediated by employee commitment.

3. Methodology

Four of the largest companies in Nakuru City: Toyota Kenya, The Coca-Cola Company, L'Oreal, and John Deere were used in the study. These companies are among the largest in the country, and could therefore, be opportune to study the extent of stoic leadership in them. The town is located in Rift Valley region of Kenya, with geographical coordinates of 0° 18' 11.1564" South and 36° 4' 48.0936" East. The designs of the study were explanatory and cross-sectional, allowing for collection of mass data and mapping of relationships in a short time [65]. The target population consisted of 948 employees from the four companies, from which 155 employees were sampled. The sample size was computed according to the formula and correction for small population in a cross-sectional study, as outlined in Sapra [66]. This formula assumed a 95% confidence level, a 5% sampling error and a 0.5 proportion in the attribute of interest [67].

Because of heterogeneity in the population, stratified sampling was used. First, employees were selected from the four firms. Then, the requisite number of workers were selected according to their positions in each firm (employee, middle-level-, and top-level managers). Proportionate representation was ensured by weighting each stratum's sample size according to its target population. Since it ensured that every employee in the population had an equal chance of being se-

lected, simple random sampling [68], was then, used to select respondents from each stratum.

Structured questionnaires were used to collect data from employees. Because the widely used 20-item Liverpool Stoicism Scale [69] has been criticized for not adequately reflecting the core doctrines of Stoic philosophy [40], this study developed a context-specific scale to measure stoic leadership. The scale was constructed based on key Stoic principles identified in the literature, including emotional resilience, rational decision-making, self-discipline, composure in adversity, and moral integrity [42]. The items were designed to capture employees' perceptions of their immediate supervisors' leadership behaviours. The final instrument consisted of eight items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Employee commitment was measured using the widely validated scale developed by Allen and Meyer [22], which captures the three dimensions of organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. This scale has been extensively applied in prior studies examining employee attitudes and performance outcomes [17] [56] [58]-[60].

To assess construct validity, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using structural equation modelling (SEM) as recommended in prior methodological studies [70]. Reliability of the measurement scales was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Data collection was conducted between November 2024 and February 2025.

To establish the effect of SL (Model 1) and AC, NC and CC (Model 2) on EP, linear regressions, using ordinary least squares, were used to determine these direct effects. The equations estimated were of the form:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon \quad \text{Model 1}$$

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon \quad \text{Model 2}$$

In which Y is EP; β_0 is the constant; $\beta_1 - \beta_4$ are the coefficients to be estimated; $X_1 - X_4$ are SL, AC, NC, and CC, respectively; while ε is an error term.

The mediating effect of employee commitment was modelled as the indirect effect of the relationship between SL and EP. Since the study theorized that SL could indirectly affect EP independently through either AC, CC, or NC, the mediation was modelled as parallel rather than serial [71]. This analysis was conducted using SEM conducted with STATA, Version 14, and the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013). A bias-corrected bootstrapping method, using 5000 bootstrap samples, was used to construct confidence intervals (CI) for the indirect effect [71].

Linear regression assumptions include the following. First, the endogenous variable should be linearly related with the exogenous variable. Secondly, residuals should be homoscedastic. Thirdly, exogenous variables should not be linearly related with each other. Lastly, the residuals should not be autocorrelated [72] [73]. Significant differences in the study were recorded at $p < 0.05$.

4. Results

4.1. Sample Characteristics

Of the 170 questionnaires given to employees of the four companies, 155 (91.18%) were returned. Most respondents were employees ($n = 83$, 654%), followed by middle-level managers ($n = 40$, 26%), and top-level managers ($n = 32$, 21%). Degree holders ($n = 111$, 72%) were the largest, followed by those with diploma ($n = 30$, 19%), and masters ($n = 8$, 5%). There were very few with PhDs and certificates (each, $n = 3$, 2%).

4.2. Descriptive Results of Stoic Leadership Practices

Table 1 presents the descriptive results for stoic leadership practices in the sample companies.

Table 1. Stoic leadership practices in sample companies.

Stoic leadership	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
I accept things that are beyond my control without frustration	2	5	3.44	1.429
I make decisions based on logic rather than emotions	1	5	3.14	1.331
I consistently adhere to my principles and values, even under pressure	2	5	3.03	1.198
I strive to understand others' perspectives, even when I disagree	2	5	3.02	1.342
I remain calm and collected when faced with challenges and stressful situations	1	5	2.41	1.279
I prioritize long-term goals over short-term gratifications	1	5	2.34	1.151
I act in accordance with my ethical beliefs, regardless of external pressures	1	5	2.23	1.236
I inspire and motivate my team to adopt a resilient mindset	1	5	2.02	1.161
Composite mean	1	5	2.33	1.043

Key: Min = minimum, max. = maximum, Std. dev. = standard deviation. **Cronbach Alpha:** 0.890.

The study found that almost every respondent ($n = 150$, 97%) had never heard of stoic leadership or stoicism. However, they could identify with some strands of the leadership. Most company leaders were found to accept things that were beyond their control without frustration (mean = 3.44), make decisions based on logic rather than emotions (3.14), consistently adhere to their principles and values, even under pressure (3.03), and strove to understand others' perspectives, even when they disagreed (3.02). However, given the large standard deviations of these means, it showed that while some firms' leadership attempted to follow stoic principles, others did not.

On the other hand, leaders in most of the companies did not remain calm and collected when faced with challenges and stressful situations (mean = 2.41), prioritize long-term goals over short-term gratifications (2.34), act in accordance with my ethical beliefs, regardless of external pressures (2.23), and inspire and motivate their team to adopt a resilient mindset (2.02). The average mean for stoic leadership (2.33) showed that, generally, stoic leadership practices in the sampled

companies were nominal.

The high value of Cronbach alpha (0.890) for the eight items indicated a reasonable level of internal consistency. Principal components factor analysis using varimax rotation extracted a single component, with an Eigen Value of 69.877%, which showed that the items measured a single construct. Thus, a variable, stoic leadership (SL), was computed by summing up all the eight items and averaging them.

4.3. Descriptive Results of Employee Commitment

Table 2 presents the descriptive results for employee commitment in the sample companies.

Table 2. Employee commitment in the sample companies.

AC (n = 155, mean = 3.116, Cronbach = 0.891)	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
There is emotional attachment to company	2	5	3.86	0.990
I feel the desire to make great effort to achieve the objectives of the company	2	5	3.81	1.185
I feel company's problems are mine	3	5	3.45	0.935
I do not want to work for another company	1	5	2.32	0.978
I feel as if I was working in a family atmosphere	1	5	2.14	1.012
NC (n = 155, mean = 3.037, Cronbach = 0.749)	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Continued loyalty is a moral issue	2	5	3.90	1.155
Commitment is a moral obligation	1	5	2.99	1.329
I would feel guilty if I left the company	1	5	2.92	1.198
I consider moving from one company to another as being immoral	1	5	2.34	1.469
CC (n = 155, mean = 2.745, Cronbach = 0.701)	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
I strongly care about the future of the company	2	5	3.74	1.328
I belong to the place I work	2	5	3.01	1.038
I want to stay no matter what other alternative opportunities are available to me	1	5	2.15	1.082
Leaving my work in this company causes problems in my life	1	5	2.08	1.298

Key: Min = minimum, max. = maximum, Std. dev. = standard deviation, AC, CC, and NC = affective, continuance, and normative commitment, respectively. **Cronbach (Overall):** 0.930.

Most respondents felt an emotional attachment to the company (mean = 3.86), the desire to make great effort to achieve the objectives of the company (3.81), and felt that the company's problems were theirs (3.45). However, most employees wanted to work for other companies (2.32) and did not feel a family atmosphere at the place of work (2.14). For normative commitment, although most workers felt that continued loyalty is a moral issue (3.90) and commitment is a moral obligation (2.99), significant fractions also felt that they would not feel guilty if they left the company (2.92), and did not consider moving from one company to another as being immoral (2.34). Most workers strongly care about the future of the

company (3.74) and felt some attachment to the place they worked (3.01). However, most did not want to stay in the event of alternative opportunities (2.15) and felt that leaving the company would not cause problems in their life (2.08).

The strongest commitment shown by employees was affective (overall mean = 3.116), followed by normative (3.037), and lastly, continuance (2.745) commitments.

4.4. Descriptive Results of Employee Performance

Table 3 presents the descriptive results for employee performance in the sampled companies.

Table 3. Employee performance in the sample companies.

Employee Performance	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
I'm able to <i>meet all</i> my targets within specified time	1	5	3.60	1.385
I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways	1	5	3.60	1.318
I observe high standards on all work procedures	1	5	3.56	1.445
I always complete work before set deadlines	1	5	3.03	1.628
I don't require supervisory intervention to carry out my work	1	5	2.47	1.494
I don't absent myself from work without valid reason	1	5	2.31	1.697
Composite mean	1	5	3.095	1.524

Key: Min = minimum, max. = maximum, Std. dev. = standard deviation. **Cronbach Alpha:** 0.912.

Most employees answered that they *met all* their targets (mean = 3.60) within the specified time, felt encouraged to come up with new and better ways (3.60), observed high standards on all work procedures (3.56), and always completed work before set deadlines (3.03). However, fewer workers felt that they did not require supervisory intervention to carry their work (2.47) and don't absent themselves from work without valid reason (2.31). The large standard deviation for the items suggested a wide variability in the answers given. The items measuring EP were fairly consistent (Cronbach = 0.912).

5. Hypotheses Tests

Main Effects

The errors were randomly scattered in the regression plot of residuals versus fitted values in both Models 1 & 2 (**Table 4**), which showed homoscedastic, roughly normally distributed, and non-autocorrelated errors. In Model 2, the assumption of multicollinearity was tenable as tolerance ranged between 0.481 - 0.808.

The R^2 in Model 1 was 0.55, which showed that stoic leadership accounted for about 55% of the variance in employee performance. Consequently, stoic leadership could explain reasonable variation in EP (Field, 2009). On the other hand, employee commitment variables could explain about 71% of the variation in EP (Model 2). Findings showed that when stoic leadership increases by one unit, EP

goes up by 0.68 or by 46% (coefficient of determination = $r^2 = 0.68^2$), *ceteris paribus*. The results supported Hypothesis 1, that stoic leadership is positively related to employee performance.

Table 4. Results of regression analyses on effects of SL and EC on EP.

	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adjusted R</i> ²	<i>F</i> Change
Model 1							
(Constant)	0.95 (0.17)		5.28	$p < 0.0001$	0.554	0.551	190.00
Stoic leadership	0.68 (0.05)	0.744	13.78	$p < 0.0001$			
Model 2							
(Constant)	0.60 (0.16)		3.59	$p < 0.0001$	0.713	0.707	124.98
AC	0.61 (0.05)	0.66	10.44	$p < 0.0001$			
CC	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.08	-1.68	0.09			
NC	0.30 (0.06)	0.28	4.47	$p < 0.0001$			

Key: AC = Affective commitment; CC = Continuance commitment; NC = Normative commitment; *B* = b coefficient (unstandardized), β = Beta (standardized coefficient); values in parentheses are standard errors.

Both affective commitment ($b = 0.61, t = 10.44, p < 0.0001$) and normative ($b = 0.30, t = 4.47, p < 0.0001$) commitments significantly predicted EP. For example, when AC increases by a unit, EP rises by 0.61 or by 37%, *ceteris paribus*. On the other hand, when CC increases, EP decreases but the effect was not significant ($b = -0.07, t = -1.68, p = 0.09$). Comparatively, AC had a greater effect on EP ($\beta = 0.66$) relative to NC ($\beta = 0.28$). The results generally supported Hypothesis 2 that employee commitment is positively related to employee performance.

Mediation Analysis

Figure 1 presents mediation effect of EC (affective, continuance, and normative commitments) on the relationship between SL and EP.

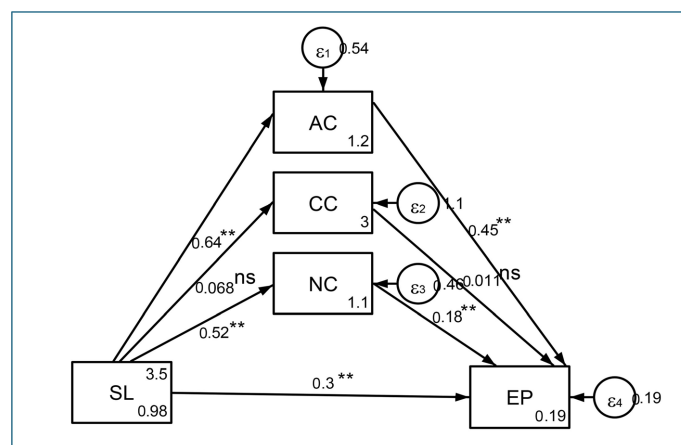


Figure 1. The mediating effect of employee commitment on the relationship between stoic leadership (SL) and employee performance (EP). AC = affective commitment; CC = continuance commitment; NC = normative commitment. ** = relationship significant at 0.01 level; ns = not significant.

The fit statistics $\chi^2/df = 3.032$ Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.962, and Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.967, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.051, showed that the measurement model fitted the data reasonably well. This indicated that construct validity was tenable. Findings showed that SL indirectly influences [$b = 0.38$, $t = 7.99$, $p < 0.0001$, 95% CI (0.287 - 0.474)] an employee's performance through its effect on affective and normative commitments but not on continuance commitment. The results showed that when SL goes up by one unit, an employee's performance increases by 0.38 or 14% ($0.64 \times 0.45 + 0.068 \times 0.011 + 0.52 \times 0.18$ in **Figure 1**) because of EC. Since, the direct effect of SL on EP was still significant [$b = 0.3$, $t = 5.68$, $p < 0.0001$, 95% CI (0.194 - 0.399)], it suggested that mediation by employee commitment is partial. The findings supported Hypothesis 3 that the relationship between stoic leadership and employee performance could be mediated by employee commitment.

6. Discussion

This study found that stoic leadership is positively related to employee performance. This could be one of the first empirical evidence linking stoic leadership with employee performance in Kenya. This study's finding supports the contention that stoic virtues could be at the heart of good leadership [50]. For instance, the four stoic virtues of practical wisdom, courage, temperance and justice [48], could be invaluable to a leader. Wisdom could enable a leader to have good judgement, understand situations quickly, moral rectitude, ability to make wise choices, shrewdness, and inventiveness in difficulties) [48], which could lead to better employee performance. The secondary virtues of courage such as perseverance, confidence, magnanimity, mental stoutness, and industry [48] could allow leaders self-discipline, empathy and calmness under pressure, which could enable them have better relations with employees. Justice and its secondary virtues of piety, kindness, sociability, and blameless [48] could breed a sense of fairness at the workplace, leading to better performance. Temperance could create mental toughness and provides tools to stay calm, get through crises [42] [47].

Both affective and normative commitments had a significant and positive relationship with EP but not CC. These findings add to the body of literature that support the differential effect of the three components of EC on employee performance, for instance, Admit and Fujie [58], Stanley and Meyer [60], and Chen and Francesco [57]. Workers with AC believe in an organization's goals and values, work hard for it and do not want to leave it [22]. Because of their extra effort, security and stability [17] [22], such employees generate competitive advantage, leading to improved performance. Because of feelings of gratitude to the organization and their own socialization, employees with NC may have strong obligation "to act in a way which meets organizational goals and interests" [74]. This could lead to better EP. On the other hand, CC had no statistically significant relationship to EP, a finding like that of Stanley and Meyer [60] and Chen and Francesco [57]. Because individuals stay because they have to, they put in just enough effort re-

quired to maintain their jobs and do not exert themselves on behalf of the firm) [22], which could explain the lack of a significant relationship.

The relationship between SL and EP was mediated by both AC and NC but not CC. Stoic leaders' focus on the common good of the organization [42], justice, piety, kindness, sociability, blameless, magnanimity and industry [48] could breed a sense of fairness and participation in decision-making, which could evoke AC in workers. Similarly, these virtues could ignite feelings of gratitude to the organization, leading to improved NC. This could explain the mediation effect of both AC and NC. Conversely, these virtues are unlikely to induce in employees the fear of losing their investments and side bets, such as their current emoluments, status and benefits were they to quit the organization. Consequently, CC did not mediate the relationship between SL and EP.

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study assessed the relationship between stoic leadership and employee performance and determined the mediating role of employee commitment on the relationship. This study empirically demonstrates that SL is positively related to EP, possibly resulting from the many virtues offered by SL, such as wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. Both affective and normative commitments had a significant and positive relationship with EP but not CC. Stoic virtues could engender a sense of fairness, participatory leadership and gratitude, leading to development of both AC and NC but not CC. Consequently, while AC and NC mediate the relationship between SL and EP the latter did not.

This study recommends that leaders in organizations should learn and implement the precepts of stoic leadership, which could lead to improved EP either directly or through its enhancement of EC. More studies should be conducted on this ancient philosophy and its effect on organization performance.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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