
Artificial Intelligence and Employee Innovation in Public Universities in Kenya

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming workplace dynamics by enhancing employee innovation, decision-making, and problem-solving. As industries increasingly integrate AI-driven technologies, the interplay between automation and human creativity becomes critical for sustainable development, and this includes higher education. This study examined the influence of AI on employee innovation in public universities in Kenya. Specifically, the study focused on assessing the influence of ethical concerns, workforce adoption and job displacement on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The study unit of analysis was the 36 public universities in Kenya, with a population of 35,502 employees. Simple random sampling was utilised in the first step to ensure that each member had the same chance of being selected. From the sampling technique, a total of 20 public universities were obtained. From these 20 universities, the Slovin's formula helped to obtain the sample size of 384 respondents. The study utilised primary data from the sampled public universities in Kenya. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to analyze and present data to facilitate interpretation. Inferential statistics entailed the use of multiple regression analysis to determine the relationships between the variables. The result was presented in the form of tables. The study concludes that ethical concerns have a positive and significant effect on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. In addition, the study concludes that workforce adoption has a positive and significant effect on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. Further, the study concludes that job displacement has a positive and significant effect on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the management of Public Universities in Kenya should promote transparency and fairness in decision-making processes. When employees perceive that promotions, funding allocations, research opportunities, and performance evaluations are conducted transparently and based on merit, they are more likely to feel valued and motivated.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Employee Innovation, Ethical concerns, workforce adoption, and job displacement.*

INTRODUCTION

The Kenya Vision 2030, a Government of Kenya (GoK) development blueprint, recognizes universities as the engine to drive the production of qualified professionals who will steer the Vision 2030 agenda for development (Mukhwana et al., 2020). Universities support development

by producing meaningful and relevant human capital, capable of producing prosperity and sustainable employment (Kelechi & Vera, 2020). This calls for human capital that is innovative. As Khan et al. (2021) state, creative employees with innovative ideas tend to engage with the latest technologies and the needed organizational processes for the survival of the organization. Innovative employees are one of the greatest assets any organization can have and play a major role in overall business efficiency and profitability. Innovative employees' are believed to enhance an organization as they feel secure in their jobs, are well trained, feel part of a team and are proud, thus enjoying doing their jobs (Agoi, 2017). In today's fast-changing and tough global environment, organizations are finding it difficult to function at optimum levels under the circumstances (Armstrong, 2016). The introduction of new technology has impacted the employees' ways of operation.

The vitality of employee innovation is crucial to universities in today's knowledge economy for their employee's work performance and competitive advantages. In Kenyan higher education, fostering employee innovation involves encouraging staff development, research on innovations, and embracing new technologies and systems like ERP to enhance service delivery and address challenges like strikes and financial issues (Kiptoo et al., 2024).

In Kenya, there are 36 public universities, which rely heavily on state funding. However, in the past few years, there has been a decrease in state funding compared to rates of enrolment, thus undermining the public universities' expansion plans (Shisia et al., 2014).

The capitation given to universities by the government has reduced to margins of about 20% every year since 2019. Consequently, public universities have continued accumulating a huge funding deficit, making it difficult for them to deliver on their mandates (The National Treasury Website, 2022). The key aim of government interventions in university education is to promote excellence and match international standards as a key driver towards improved performance (Subiyatko et al., 2020).

Rapid changes in technology, market fluctuations, economic changes and the business competition at both the national and global levels are fueling/fueled by each other; they are driving the organizations to continuously innovate at the workplace to improve employee performance, leading to organizational effectiveness. It makes the role of workplace culture more vital. The culture of employee innovation causes, strengthens, sustains and incentivizes employee performance to enhance employee innovativeness (Khan et al., 2021).

Kenyan public universities, like any other organization must contend with a highly dynamic and technological environment without which they will experience insurmountable difficulties in trying to achieve sustainable development without innovating. They have to develop new styles of operation. Competitive edge is acquired because firms generally differ because they can develop competencies in diverse technologies (Awuor et al., 2023). This calls for the integration of AI tools, systems, or practices within the university. Higher adoption of AI tools and technologies might lead to a more innovative working environment (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Rai et al., 2021).

AI is associated with the human mind in terms of using a particular way in which human beings think and learn the problem, and after that, find a way to solve the problem (Holmes et al. 2019). Watson 2014) posits that artificial intelligence is beginning to revolutionize higher education, reshaping the landscape in ways only imaginable a few years ago (Dai, 2024). AI offers four functionalities relevant to the organization: (1) support for decision-making processes, (2) integrated data governance, (3) interaction and virtual agents, and (4) the automation of

administration (AI HLEG 2019). AI technologies in these areas can provide descriptive, predictive, exploratory, prescriptive, or automated decision-making.

Artificial intelligence also performs every job like a human being's mind reacts and performs in any kind of problematic situation with the aim of improving the quality of education offered by implementing technological tools is a common theme across the globe where one of the cornerstones of achieving it is through the application of modern technology such as AI, which can not only be used for direct teaching but also improve systems for developing students' abilities and assessing and providing feedback on their work (Kiptoo et al., 2024).

AI has been widely accepted as it has increasingly become part of our daily lives. It rapidly transforms industries such as healthcare, transportation, retail and finance (Russell and Norvig, 2018). Education is another area that offers incredible potential for the application of AI technology. From 2008 to 2017, the global venture capital investment that flowed into AI-based education reached \$1047 billion (Mou, 2019).

Phillips (2025) argues that AI's impact on higher education is undeniable: it personalises learning experiences, adaptive testing, predictive analytics, and chatbots for learning and research (Wang et al., 2023). As these technologies evolve, they promise to create more accessible, practical, and personalized learning environments

The term AI, coined by John McCarthy in 1955, is defined as a computer with the capability to perform a variety of human cognitive tasks, such as communicating, reasoning, learning, and problem-solving (Guan et al., 2020). According to Holmes et al. (2019), artificial intelligence is closely linked to the workings of the human mind, as it involves mimicking the way humans think, learn from problems, and develop solutions. The European Commission describes AI as either software or hardware systems that, through data acquisition, reason and process information to decide the most suitable action for achieving a given goal or (in robotics) undertaking programmed actions.

AI is not just a futuristic concept but is actively reshaping and redefining academic practice (Franzen, 2024). Despite this remarkable progress, educational institutions have been notably slow in embracing these groundbreaking innovations, as revealed by a national survey conducted in April 2023 by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's Cooperative for Educational Technologies (Lucariello, 2023)

As artificial intelligence (AI) technology becomes more complex and far-reaching in its implications, we are in danger of education losing the race with technology: our understanding, organizations, policies, and ethics could be buried under an avalanche of technology diffusion and adaptation (Koskimies et al., 2022). A danger is that the pace and direction of AI innovation are dictated by the tech giant's pursuit of profit rather than employee strategies meeting needs. AI innovation – may deliver financial and technical success, but meeting social needs is another matter if trust is endangered and social consternation rises (Leslie, 2020).

In the USA, Zhang & Aslan (2021) show that when instructors are prepared and supported with adequate AI training, the quality of education improves, as AI tools enable personalized learning experiences and reduce administrative workload. In the UK, Kohnke et al. (2023), instructors express the need for continuous professional development to use AI tools effectively in classrooms. They argue that AI preparedness involves not only technical training but also ethical understanding, which significantly influences teaching outcomes.

In France, AI preparedness is closely linked to government policies promoting digital education. A UNESCO (2022) report highlighted how AI initiatives in French universities have contributed to improving teaching methodologies. However, the success of these initiatives largely depends

on instructors' preparedness to integrate AI into pedagogical practices. China has aggressively implemented AI in higher education, focusing on instructors' AI competencies. According to Qian et al. (2021), universities have adopted AI-driven tools, but the effectiveness of these tools is contingent upon instructors' digital literacy. Instructors with higher AI preparedness positively influence students' learning experiences, enhancing the overall quality of education.

Hutson et al. (2022) highlighted that higher education is among the industries poised for significant impact from AI integration. Despite apprehensions from some educators and administrators regarding this technological leap, Franzen (2024) argued that AI's presence in higher education is not a distant possibility but an imminent reality. Rahiman and Kodikal (2023) further emphasized the accelerating adoption of AI in educational settings, yet a notable gap in research at the institutional level still exists.

Understanding the perceptions surrounding AI adoption among administrators, support staff, faculty, and students is essential for navigating this integration effectively and efficiently, particularly when aligned to institutional policy or strategic plans (Phillips, 2025). Similarly, understanding institutional perspectives provided the university with a robust policy framework that cannot be overstated when adopting innovations, as Lund et al. (2020).

A study carried out by Ololube (2019) in Nigeria posits that AI tools have enhanced the quality of research outputs by providing more accurate data analysis and predictive modeling although the study also notes that inadequate infrastructure and limited access to AI resources are barriers to maximizing its potential in Nigerian higher education. In South Africa, Ngwane & Mahlangu (2020) indicate that AI adoption in South African universities has positively impacted research quality by facilitating data-driven decision-making and fostering interdisciplinary research and highlight how AI has improved research collaboration and resource management in higher education.

In Egypt, Ali & Ibrahim (2022) revealed that AI has enabled Egyptian universities to conduct more robust and sophisticated research, particularly in the fields of engineering and data science and the use of AI has significantly enhanced research accuracy and collaboration among scholars. In Ethiopia, Mulugeta et al. (2021) discuss the integration of AI in Ethiopian universities and its impact on personalized learning and academic management and found that the adoption of AI has improved administrative efficiency and the ability to provide tailored learning experiences, contributing positively to the quality of education, although infrastructural challenges and the digital divide remain key barriers.

In Tanzania, Ng'wanakilala & Chuma (2019) examined the introduction of AI in universities and its effects on the quality of higher education found that the adoption of AI tools has enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes, especially through e-learning platforms, since AI has been used in academic performance monitoring, helping to improve instructional quality. Adoption of AI applications in research management and student learning support in Uganda has contributed significantly to better educational outcomes, which have facilitated smoother administration and more personalized learning environments, although there is a need for more institutional support to fully harness the benefits of AI (Kigozi and Namuleme, 2022).

In Kenya, Shikokoti and Reuben (2024) emphasized the role of AI in augmenting research capabilities in Kenyan higher education institutions of which AI-powered tools have improved data analysis, plagiarism detection, and research collaboration, thereby contributing to higher research quality and productivity and found that AI is instrumental in advancing interdisciplinary research, particularly in STEM fields, which enhances the overall quality of education through innovative teaching methods. According to Waweru and Mutisya (2020), AI adoption in Kenyan

universities has significantly enhanced administrative functions, learning management systems, and student support services. AI tools such as chatbots, virtual learning environments, and data analytics have contributed to improving educational outcomes by enabling personalized learning and enhancing access to resources, although the integration of AI is still limited by technological gaps and insufficient training for instructors.

Otieno and Mwangi (2022) examined the adoption of AI in teaching and learning at the University of Nairobi and found that AI applications in e-learning platforms, such as adaptive learning systems and automated grading, have contributed to improving the quality of education by offering customized learning experiences and efficient evaluation methods, although most faculty members lacked sufficient preparedness to fully integrate AI.

Statement of the problem

The rapid development of digital technology has brought development opportunities to higher education, as well as challenges. In order to promote digital technology, continuous innovation is needed. Employee innovation behavior is the starting point and key to organizational innovation (Wu, 2025).

Public universities in Kenya face numerous structural and operational challenges that inhibit innovation and technological advancement. These include slow decision-making processes, outdated teaching methods, weak administrative systems, low research output, and a general resistance to new ideas (Subiatko et al., 2020). In response, scholars recommend a shift from traditional public service models to more market-driven approaches that emphasize employee innovation as a means to enhance institutional agility and relevance (Kiriri, 2025).

Employee innovation, which encompasses idea generation, promotion, and realization, is key to fostering institutional adaptability and competitiveness (Marjo-Riitta et al., 2018). This requires a proactive culture that anticipates market trends (Gauthier et al., 2021), embraces risk-taking (Almasri & Ahmad, 2020), and supports organizational self-renewal (Gupta & Acharya, 2017). Successful adoption of innovation can diversify income streams, attract international students, and improve the prestige of Kenyan public universities (Mamun & Fazal, 2018; Klofsten et al., 2021).

Despite having 36 public universities, Kenya's higher education sector is hindered by declining government funding, rising student enrolments, and staff shortages, resulting in overburdened faculty and diminished academic output (Shisia et al., 2014; The National Treasury Website, 2022; Odhiambo, 2018). Global rankings reflect this decline, with only a few Kenyan institutions appearing in continental or global lists (Web Ranking, 2023; Unirank, 2021; Scimago Institutional Rankings, 2023).

Technological innovation, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI), has the potential to address many of these challenges by streamlining decision-making, enhancing research, and improving teaching outcomes (Koskimies et al., 2022; Flemig et al., 2016). However, barriers such as insufficient infrastructure, resistance to change, and inadequate preparedness among staff hinder its integration (Ololube, 2019; Ngwane & Mahlangu, 2020; Otieno & Mwangi, 2022).

Understanding stakeholder perceptions—administrators, faculty, support staff, and students—is crucial for aligning AI adoption with institutional strategy and governance frameworks (Phillips, 2025). Without this alignment, efforts to innovate and digitize public university operations may remain fragmented and ineffective. Owing to the above issues. The study examined the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya.

Objective of the Study

The study was based on the following research objectives

1. To determine the influence of ethical concerns on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya
2. To establish the influence of workforce adoption on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya
3. To examine the influence of job displacement on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

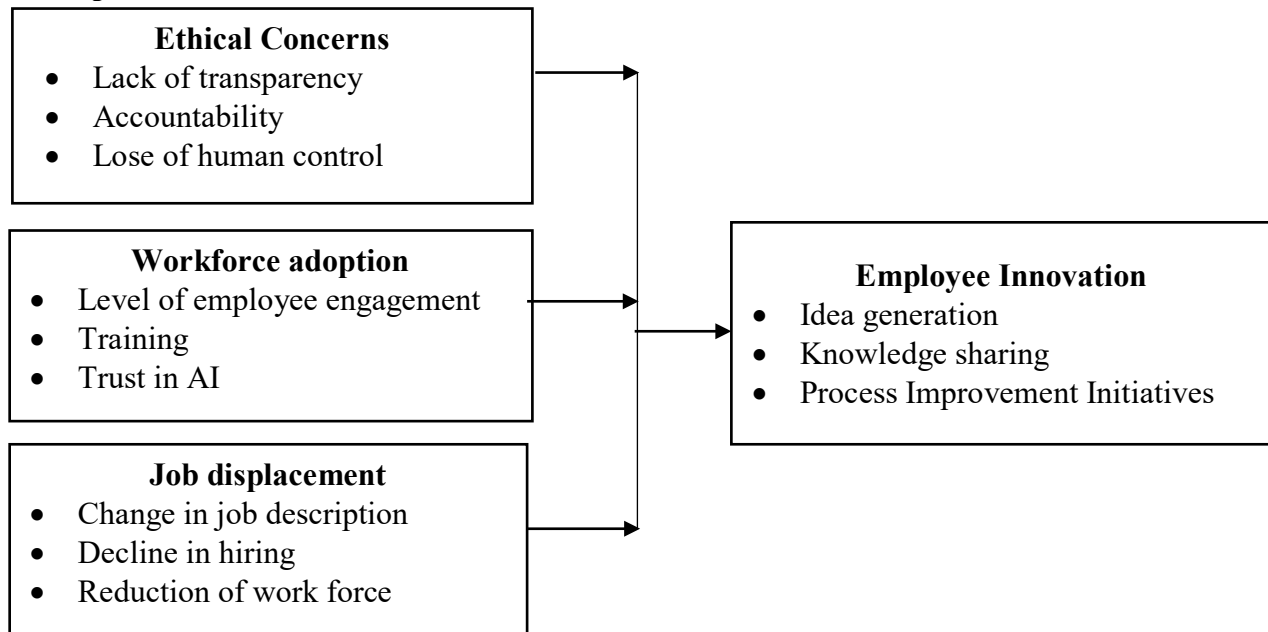
The research was based on the following research hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between ethical concerns and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between workforce adoption and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between job displacement and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The study was guided by the Deontological Ethics, Sociotechnical Systems Theory, Technological Unemployment and Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity.

Deontological Ethics

This theory was developed by Immanuel Kant in the late 1780s. Deontological Ethics is a moral theory that posits the importance of adhering to moral rules or duties irrespective of their outcomes. It uses rules to distinguish right from wrong (Dilbar, 2024). This theory relates to ethical concern in that we have a duty to treat all humans with dignity and respect when it comes to the use of AI. AI systems should follow ethical rules and guidelines, such as respecting user privacy, ensuring transparency in decision-making, and safeguarding human rights. Developers

should design AI with a sense of responsibility, ensuring that systems follow ethical principles even if the outcomes are uncertain or challenging.

Sociotechnical Systems Theory

Socio-technical theory originated in the 1950s at the Tavistock Institute in London, led by Trist and Bamforth 1951. The theory posits that organizations are best understood and improved by considering both their social and technical aspects as interdependent parts of a complex system, rather than focusing solely on one or the other. According to Baxter & Somerville (2011), organizations are profoundly affected by technological advancements and require a flexible customized change model to fit the social network of the specific organization into which technology is being introduced. The theory relates to workplace adoption in that AI systems in the workplace should not only be technically efficient but also aligned with human work practices and organizational culture. Successful adoption of AI requires considering how technology will affect employee roles, communication, and collaboration, while also ensuring that employees feel supported in using AI tools.

Technological Unemployment Theory

This theory was founded by John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s. Technological unemployment theory suggests that technological advancements, especially automation, lead to job displacement by making certain human labor tasks obsolete. Keynes believed that as machines take over repetitive and manual labor, workers may be displaced without corresponding job creation, leading to higher unemployment rates. The connection of this theory to job displacement is that, with AI's ability to automate routine tasks such as data entry, customer service, and even complex decision-making in certain domains, workers in these roles may face displacement as machines become more capable of performing their jobs more efficiently and at lower cost.

Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity

The componential theory of creativity was articulated by Teresa Amabile in 1983. This theory explains how creativity and innovation happen within individuals and how the work environment can influence this process. It proposes that four components are necessary for any creative output: domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, intrinsic task motivation, and a supportive social environment. These components work together, with the individual's internal skills and motivation influencing their creativity, while the social environment provides the context and support (Amabile, 2013). This theory is connected to employee innovation in that organizations can foster innovation by developing skills, encouraging creative thinking, and creating environments that enhance intrinsic motivation.

Empirical Review

Ethical Concerns and Employee Innovation of Public Universities

The first objective of the study was to investigate the influence of ethical concerns on employee innovation in public universities in Kenya. The objective hypothesis was as follows:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between ethical concerns and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya

Ethical considerations are crucial for fostering a culture of innovation within public universities. When ethical principles are prioritized, employees are more likely to feel supported, leading to increased performance, creativity, and innovative work behavior (IWB). Unethical practices can hinder innovation by creating a toxic environment and undermining trust (Moeini, 2024).

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement and shifting economic landscapes, universities stand at the forefront of innovation, job creation, and the commercialization of

knowledge. This pivotal role, however, brings into focus the critical balance between fostering economic development and adhering to ethical standards (Moeini, 2024).

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Human Resources (HR) departments is transforming job performance evaluation processes, but it also introduces a range of ethical Challenges. One of the most pressing issues is algorithmic bias. AI systems rely on historical data to make predictions and recommendations, which can inadvertently perpetuate existing biases present in the data. For instance, if the data used to train performance evaluation algorithms reflects historical biases against certain demographic groups, the AI tools may reinforce these biases, leading to unfair evaluations and exacerbating inequalities in the workplace. Addressing this issue requires a thorough examination of data sources and the implementation of strategies to ensure that AI systems do not unfairly disadvantage any group (Javaid & Pearl, 2024).

A significant ethical concern is the potential for AI systems to perpetuate existing biases. In educational settings, AI algorithms used for admissions, grading, or performance evaluations may inadvertently disadvantage certain groups. For instance, in Kenya, the deployment of Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS) has raised concerns about reinforcing societal biases, thereby affecting fairness and equity in education. Such biases can stifle employee innovation by creating an environment where certain groups feel marginalized or unfairly treated (Muindi & Aslam, 2024).

Transparency is another critical concern. AI-driven performance evaluations often involve complex algorithms that can be opaque to both HR professionals and employees. The lack of clarity about how performance metrics are determined and how decisions are made can lead to mistrust and perceived unfairness. Ensuring that AI systems operate transparently and that their decision-making processes are understandable to all stakeholders is essential for maintaining ethical standards in performance evaluations (Javaid & Pearl, 2024).

The shift from human to AI-driven evaluations raises questions about the dehumanization of the performance review process. Traditional performance evaluations involve personal interactions where feedback is tailored to the individual's strengths and areas for improvement. AI systems, by contrast, may rely on impersonal metrics and data-driven assessments, potentially overlooking the nuanced and subjective aspects of employee performance. This shift could undermine the relational aspects of performance evaluations that contribute to employee development and morale (Javaid & Pearl, 2024).

Workplace Adoption and Employee Innovation of Public Universities

The second objective of the study was to investigate the influence of workplace adoption on employee innovation in public universities in Kenya. The objective hypothesis was as follows:

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between workforce adoption and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya

The adoption of electronic resources and e-learning platforms is pivotal for innovation in African universities. In Tanzania, factors such as awareness of ICT policies, institutional support, and infrastructural adequacy are found to influence faculty members' adoption of e-resources. Similarly, in Kenya, stakeholder participation and financial resources are identified as significant determinants in the adoption of e-learning systems. (Mzumbe & Kuzilwa ;2023, *Ikileng* ;2015). Makina & Madiope (2016) argue that despite the benefits of technological adoption, challenges persist. At the University of South Africa, lecturers faced difficulties transitioning to online teaching due to inadequate staff development and resistance to change, highlighting the need for a comprehensive support system.

Organizational culture plays a pivotal role in either facilitating or hindering innovation. A culture that encourages open communication, participatory decision-making, and continuous professional development creates an environment conducive to adopting new ideas and technologies (Cincioğlu, 2015).

In Kenya, the adoption of e-learning in public universities faces challenges, notably limited ICT skills among lecturers. A significant proportion of faculty lack formal training in e-learning, hindering effective implementation. Universities should invest heavily in the improvement of e-learning infrastructure, e-learning content development, capacity building, attitude change, and enhancement of e-learning awareness (Mutisya & Makokha, 2016).

Job Displacement and Employee Innovation of Public Universities

The third objective of the study was to investigate the influence of job displacement on employee innovation in public universities in Kenya. The objective hypothesis was as follows:

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between job displacement and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya

AI's capacity to automate routine and administrative tasks poses a risk to certain university roles. Positions involving repetitive functions, such as administrative support, data entry, and basic IT services, are particularly susceptible to automation. This trend aligns with broader labor market shifts, where middle-skill jobs are increasingly vulnerable to AI-driven automation (Chui et al., 2016; Bakhshi et al., 2017).

One of the primary concerns surrounding the widespread adoption of AI is its potential to automate tasks traditionally performed by humans, leading to job displacement in certain sectors. Industries such as manufacturing, retail, and customer service are already experiencing the effects of automation, with AI-powered robots and algorithms replacing repetitive and routine tasks. As AI technology continues to advance, jobs that involve manual labor or routine data processing are at risk of being automated, leading to layoffs and restructuring within organizations (Frey & Osborne, 2017; McKinsey Global Institute, 2017; Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2020).

AI's capacity to automate routine and administrative tasks poses a risk to certain university roles. Positions involving repetitive functions, such as administrative support, data entry, and basic IT services, are particularly susceptible to automation. This trend aligns with broader labor market shifts, where middle-skill jobs are increasingly vulnerable to AI-driven automation (Chui et al., 2016; Arntz et al., 2016).

To address the challenges posed by job displacement, reskilling and upskilling initiatives are essential to equip the workforce with the skills needed to thrive in the digital economy. Governments, educational institutions, and businesses must collaborate to provide training programs and lifelong learning opportunities that focus on emerging technologies such as AI, data science, and cybersecurity. By investing in reskilling initiatives, individuals can acquire new skills and adapt to changing job requirements, ensuring their continued relevance in the workforce (OECD, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2020; OECD, 2021).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design to establish the relationship that exists between the dependent variable and the independent variables. According to Yin (2017), this design allows researchers to thoroughly explore all facets of a topic, enabling comprehensive analysis and well-founded conclusions.

The study unit of analysis was the 36 public universities spread across several counties in Kenya, with a population of 35,502 employees. The minimum sample was determined using the

statistical formula of Fisher for calculating sample size. The formula is $n = (z)^2 p(1-p)/d^2$. The expression below was used by the researcher to obtain the sample size as suggested by Kothari and Garg (2014).

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where n is the sample size (wherever the population is > 10,000), z is the standardized normal distribution set at 1.96, which corresponds to 95% confidence interval; p is the expected population proportion with desired characteristics being measured at 0.5; q = 1 – p; d is the level of statistical significance set as 0.05.

If z statistics is taken as 1.96 and the desired accuracy at a 0.5 level of significance, the sample size is:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{(0.05)^2} \qquad n = \frac{1.9604}{0.0025} = 384$$

This formula is applicable only when the population size of a study is more than 10,000. In this study, therefore, the sample size is 384 because the target population was more than 10,000.

The study utilized primary data from the sampled public universities in Kenya. The data was collected using a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire, which consisted of a 5-likert scale with 6 sections. Prior to data collection, the study used 10% of the sample for a pilot study to ascertain the reliability and validity of the instrument. For reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was used to estimate the internal consistency of the instrument (Muathe, 2010). Validity was also checked to ascertain internal coherence of the tool, this involve content, criteria and construct (Gadsboell & Tibaek, 2017).

Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to analyze and present data to facilitate interpretation. Inferential statistics entailed the use of multiple regression analysis to determine the relationships between the variables. The result was presented in the form of tables. The research model was multiple regression as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (X_1) + \beta_2 (X_2) + \beta_3 (X_3) + \epsilon$$

Where: Y = Employee Innovation

X₁ = ethical concerns

X₂ = workplace adoption

X₃ = job displacement

ε = Error term

FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

Ethical Concerns and Employee Innovation

The first specific objective of the study was to determine the influence of ethical concerns on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements related to ethical concerns and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. The results are shown in Table 1.

From the results, the respondents agreed that decisions made within the organization are not always clearly communicated to employees (M= 3.881, SD= 0.706). The respondents agreed that there is a lack of transparency in the way information is shared within the company (M=3.870, SD=0.725). Further, the respondents agreed that employees feel important decisions are often made without a clear explanation (M=3.778, SD=0.805). The respondents agreed that employees

are held accountable for their actions and decisions in the workplace (M=3.754, SD= 0.708). The respondents also agreed that there are clear systems in place to ensure accountability at all levels of the organization (M=3.728, SD=0.801). The respondents also agreed that accountability for both individual and team actions is consistently enforced (M=3.726, SD=0.642). The respondents also agreed that automation and AI-driven processes diminish human control over critical decisions (M=3.725, SD=0.567). The respondents also agreed that the organization increasingly relies on automated systems, leading to a loss of human oversight in key areas (M=3.695, SD=0.716).

Table 1: Ethical Concerns and Employee Innovation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Decisions made within the organization are not always clearly communicated to employees.	3.881	0.706
There is a lack of transparency in the way information is shared within the company.	3.870	0.725
Employees feel important decisions are often made without clear explanation.	3.778	0.805
Employees are held accountable for their actions and decisions in the workplace.	3.754	0.708
There are clear systems in place to ensure accountability at all levels of the organization.	3.728	0.801
Accountability for both individual and team actions is consistently enforced.	3.726	0.642
Automation and AI-driven processes diminish human control over critical decisions.	3.725	0.567
The organization increasingly relies on automated systems leading to a loss of human oversight in key areas.	3.695	0.716
Aggregate	3.770	0.709

Workforce Adoption and Employee Innovation

The second specific objective of the study was to establish the influence of workforce adoption on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements related to workforce adoption and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. The results were as shown in Table 2.

From the results, the respondents agreed that employees are actively involved in the company's initiatives and contribute to its success (M=3.852, SD=0.754). Further, the respondents agreed that there is a high level of motivation among employees to perform well and contribute to organizational goals (M=3.845, SD=0.708). In addition, the respondents agreed that employees feel a strong sense of connection to the company's mission and values (M=3.828, SD=0.752). The respondents agreed that employees receive adequate training to effectively use new technologies and tools introduced in the organization (M=3.795, SD=0.730). Further, the respondents agreed that training programs are regularly offered to enhance employees' skills and knowledge (M=3.793, SD=0.615). The respondents also agreed that employees trust AI and automated systems to make accurate and fair decisions (M=3.771, SD=0.832). Further, the respondents agreed that the organization provides sufficient information on how AI technologies are being used and their impact on the workplace (M=3.687, SD=0.562). The respondents also

agreed that AI applications in the workplace are designed with ethical considerations in mind (M=3.671, SD=0.724).

Table 2: Workforce Adoption and Employee Innovation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employees are actively involved in the company's initiatives and contribute to its success.	3.852	0.754
There is a high level of motivation among employees to perform well and contribute to organizational goals.	3.845	0.708
Employees feel a strong sense of connection to the company's mission and values.	3.828	0.752
Employees receive adequate training to effectively use new technologies and tools introduced in the organization.	3.795	0.730
Training programs are regularly offered to enhance employees' skills and knowledge.	3.793	0.615
Employees trust AI and automated systems to make accurate and fair decisions.	3.771	0.832
The organization provides sufficient information on how AI technologies are being used and their impact on the workplace.	3.687	0.562
AI applications in the workplace are designed with ethical considerations in mind.	3.671	0.724
Aggregate	3.780	0.710

Job Displacement and Employee Innovation

The third specific objective of the study was to examine the influence of job displacement on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements related to job displacement and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. The results were as shown Table 3.

From the results, the respondents agreed that job roles within the organization significantly change due to technological advancements (M=3.892, SD=0.704). Further, the respondents agreed that employees' job descriptions are continuously evolving to adapt to new technologies (M=3.879, SD=0.809). The respondents also agreed that there is a noticeable shift in the responsibilities and tasks associated with most positions in the company (M=3.854, SD=0.675). In addition, the respondents agreed that the organization reduces its hiring efforts in recent times, particularly in certain job sectors (M=3.845, SD=0.718). Further, the respondents agreed that there is a noticeable decline in the number of new hires being brought into the organization (M=3.799, SD=0.741). The respondents also agreed that hiring trends within the company have slowed down, especially for roles that may be replaced by automation (M=3.768, SD=0.692). Further, the respondents agreed that the company reduces its workforce due to technological advancements (M=3.752, SD=0.763). The respondents also agreed that the organization is increasingly relying on fewer employees, with some job functions being automated (M=3.686, SD=0.506)

Table 3: Job Displacement and Employee Innovation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Job roles within the organization significantly change due to technological advancements.	3.892	0.704

Employees' job descriptions are continuously evolving to adapt to new technologies.	3.879	0.809
There is a noticeable shift in the responsibilities and tasks associated with most positions in the company.	3.854	0.675
The organization reduces its hiring efforts in recent times, particularly in certain job sectors.	3.845	0.718
There is a noticeable decline in the number of new hires being brought into the organization.	3.799	0.741
Hiring trends within the company have slowed down, especially for roles that may be replaced by automation	3.768	0.692
The company reduces its workforce due to technological advancements.	3.752	0.763
The organization is increasingly relying on fewer employees, with some job functions being automated	3.686	0.506
Aggregate	3.809	0.701

Employee Innovation

The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements related to employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. The results were as shown in Table 4. From the results, the respondents agreed that employees regularly come up with new ideas to improve work processes or products (M=3.891, SD=0.819). In addition, the respondents agreed that the workplace encourages sharing innovative ideas within teams or with supervisors (M=3.876, SD=0.548). Further, the respondents agreed that the work environment fosters creativity and supports the generation of new ideas (M=3.850, SD=0.677). The participants also agreed that they ensure that knowledge and expertise are actively shared among colleagues to enhance work performance (M=3.793, SD=0.768). In addition, the respondents agreed that knowledge sharing is valued and promoted within the organization (M=3.775, SD=0.639). The respondents also agreed that employees participate in initiatives designed to improve work processes and increase efficiency (M=3.753, SD=0.712). In addition, the respondents agreed that there is a continuous focus on finding ways to improve current work procedures and practices (M=3.693, SD=0.514). The respondents also agreed that the organization provides necessary resources and support to implement process improvement initiatives (M=3.653, SD=0.675).

Table 4: Employee Innovation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employees regularly come up with new ideas to improve work processes or products.	3.891	0.819
The workplace encourages sharing innovative ideas within teams or with supervisors.	3.876	0.548
The work environment fosters creativity and supports the generation of new ideas.	3.850	0.677
Knowledge and expertise are actively shared among colleagues to enhance work performance.	3.793	0.768
Knowledge sharing is valued and promoted within the organization.	3.775	0.639
Employees participate in initiatives designed to improve work processes and increase efficiency.	3.753	0.712
There is a continuous focus on finding ways to improve current work procedures and practices.	3.693	0.514

The organization provides necessary resources and support to implement process improvement initiatives.	3.653	0.675
Aggregate	3.786	0.669

Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics in the current study focused on correlation and regression analysis. Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength of the relationship, while regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between the dependent variable (employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya) and independent variables (ethical concerns, workforce adoption and job displacement).

Correlation Analysis

The present study used Pearson correlation analysis to determine the strength of association between independent variables (ethical concerns, workforce adoption and job displacement) and the dependent variable (employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya). Pearson correlation coefficient ranges between zero and one, where the strength of the association increases with an increase in the value of the correlation coefficient.

Table 5: Correlation Coefficients

		Employee Innovation	Ethical Concerns	Workforce Adoption	Job Displacement
Employee Innovation	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	357			
Ethical Concerns	Pearson Correlation	.829**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002			
	N	357	357		
Workforce Adoption	Pearson Correlation	.858**	.176	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.432		
	N	357	357	357	
Job Displacement	Pearson Correlation	.876**	.109	.379	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.019	.043	
	N	357	357	357	357

From the results, there was a very strong relationship between ethical concerns and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya ($r = 0.829$, $p\text{-value} = 0.002$). The relationship was significant since the $p\text{-value} 0.002$ was less than 0.05 (significance level). The findings are in line with the findings of Moeini (2024), who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between ethical concerns and employee innovation.

Moreover, the results revealed that there is a very strong relationship between workforce adoption and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya ($r = 0.858$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001$). The relationship was significant since the $p\text{-value} 0.001$ was less than 0.05 (significance level). The findings conform to the findings of Mzumbe and Kuzilwa (2023) that there is a very strong relationship between workforce adoption and employee innovation.

Further, the results revealed that there is a very strong relationship between job displacement and employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya ($r = 0.876$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$). The relationship was significant since the $p\text{-value} 0.000$ was less than 0.05 (significance level). The findings are in line with the findings of Acemoglu and Restrepo (2020) that there is a very strong relationship between job displacement and employee innovation.

Regression Analysis

Multivariate regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between independent variables (ethical concerns, workforce adoption and job displacement) and the dependent variable (employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya)

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.859	.738	.736	.10428

a. Predictors: (Constant), ethical concerns, workforce adoption and job displacement

The model summary was used to explain the variation in the dependent variable that could be explained by the independent variables. The R-squared for the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable was 0.738 . This implied that 73.8% of the variation in the dependent variable (p employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya) could be explained by independent variables (ethical concerns, workforce adoption and job displacement).

Table 7: Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	102.091	3	34.03	1890.56	.000 ^b
Residual	6.433	353	.018		
Total	108.524	356			

a. Dependent Variable: employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya

b. Predictors: (Constant), ethical concerns, workforce adoption and job displacement

The ANOVA was used to determine whether the model was a good fit for the data. F calculated was 1890.56 while the F critical was 2.630 . The $p\text{-value}$ was 0.000 . Since the F-calculated was greater than the F-critical and the $p\text{-value} 0.000$ was less than 0.05 , the model was considered a good fit for the data. Therefore, the model can be used to predict the influence of ethical concerns, workforce adoption and job displacement on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya.

Table 8: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	d Coefficients Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.268	0.071		3.775	0.003
	ethical concerns	0.314	0.083	0.315	3.783	0.002
	workforce adoption	0.361	0.094	0.360	3.840	0.001
	job displacement	0.372	0.099	0.371	3.758	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya

The regression model was as follows:

$$Y = 0.268 + 0.314X_1 + 0.361X_2 + 0.372X_3 + \varepsilon$$

According to the results, ethical concerns have a significant effect on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya, $\beta_1=0.314$, p-value= 0.002). The relationship was considered significant since the p-value 0.002 was less than the significance level of 0.05. The findings are in line with the findings of Moeini (2024), who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between ethical concerns and employee innovation.

The results also revealed that workforce adoption has a significant effect on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya, $\beta_2=0.361$, p value= 0.001). The relationship was considered significant since the p-value 0.001 was less than the significance level of 0.05. The findings conform to the findings of Mzumbe and Kuzilwa (2023) that there is a very strong relationship between workforce adoption and employee innovation

Furthermore, the results revealed that job displacement has a significant effect on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya, $\beta_3=0.372$, p value= 0.000). The relationship was considered significant since the p-value 0.000 was less than the significance level of 0.05. The findings are in line with the findings of Acemoglu and Restrepo (2020) that there is a very strong relationship between job displacement and employee innovation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study concludes that ethical concerns have a positive and significant effect on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. Findings revealed that lack of transparency, accountability and loss of human control influence employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya.

In addition, the study concludes that workforce adoption has a positive and significant effect on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. Findings revealed that the level of employee engagement, training and trust in AI influences employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya.

Further, the study concludes that job displacement has a positive and significant effect on employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. Findings revealed that changes in job description, decline in hiring and reduction of workforce influence employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the management of Public Universities in Kenya should promote transparency and fairness in decision-making processes. When employees perceive that promotions, funding allocations, research opportunities, and performance evaluations are conducted transparently and based on merit, they are more likely to feel valued and motivated.

In addition, the study recommends that the management of Public Universities in Kenya should implement continuous professional development programs tailored to emerging technologies and pedagogical trends. By equipping staff with up-to-date skills and knowledge, universities can foster a culture of adaptability and openness to change.

The study also recommends that the management of Public Universities in Kenya should establish structured internal mobility and reskilling programs. Instead of viewing job displacement as a loss, universities can create opportunities for affected employees to transition into new, innovation-driven roles through targeted training and mentorship.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study was limited to the influence of AI on employee innovation in public universities in Kenya hence, the study findings cannot be generalized to employee innovation in other organizations in Kenya. The study therefore suggests further studies on the influence of AI on employee innovation in other organizations in Kenya.

Further, the study found that the independent variables (ethical concerns, workforce adoption and job displacement) could only explain 73.8% of employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya. This study, therefore, suggests further research on other factors affecting employee innovation in Public Universities in Kenya.

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