

# The Effect of Reciprocal Mentoring on the Performance of the Kenya Defence Forces: The Moderating Role of Organizational Culture

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**Abstract:** This study evaluated how organizational culture moderates the relationship between multigenerational techniques and the organizational performance of the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF), with a particular focus on reciprocal mentorship. The design used was an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. 193 KDF personnel at Isiolo Barracks were chosen by stratified random sampling, and quantitative data was gathered from them using a standardized questionnaire. Multiple regression analysis, correlation, and descriptive statistics were performed. The quantitative results were enhanced by qualitative information gleaned from interviews. A 5% significance level was used for testing the hypotheses. According to the study, reciprocal mentoring significantly improved organizational performance ( $\beta=0.468$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). A supportive culture increased the success of multigenerational methods, as evidenced by the substantial, significant positive moderating effect of organizational culture ( $\beta=0.8339$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Generalizability was limited by the study's geographic focus on a single barrack. The study recommended that various KDF units should be longitudinally included in future studies. The results suggested that in order to fully use its intergenerational workforce, KDF leadership should establish formal reciprocal mentoring programs and actively foster an inclusive workplace atmosphere. This study bridged the gap in the literature by providing real data from an African military setting on the connection between performance, organizational culture, and reciprocal mentorship.

**Keywords:** Multigenerational Strategies, Organizational Performance, Organizational Culture, Military Leadership, Kenyan Defense Forces, Reciprocal Mentoring.

## 1. Introduction

The Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) are not an exception to the fundamental changes in organizational dynamics brought about by the integration of Generation Z into the global workforce. For traditional, hierarchical organizations like the military, this generation poses both a challenge and an opportunity due to its digital nativity and clear expectations for adaptability and inclusivity (Albescu, 2022; Prasanna & Priyanka, 2024). Millennials, Generation Z, Baby Boomers, and Generation X now make up the KDF. Each generation has its own values, communication preferences, and work-related views (Kupczyk et al., 2021). Miscommunication, disengagement, and decreased operational performance can result from these

disparities if they are not strategically controlled (Lyons & Kuron, 2022). The KDF needs intentional multigenerational tactics that promote integration and synergy in order to capitalize on this diversity. One important tactic to blend the experience of older cohorts with the technological fluency and creative viewpoints of younger members is reciprocal mentorship, which enables two-way information transfer between senior and junior workers (Ng & Parry, 2021). The effectiveness of such strategies is largely dependent on the organizational culture in which they are implemented, thus it is not assured (Costanza *et al.*, 2023). To optimize performance goals including mission readiness, team cohesiveness, and organizational stability, the military's disciplined, hierarchical, and values-based culture must change to include psychological safety, inclusion, and cross-generational learning (Akin, 2020). Despite the strategic importance of intergenerational programs, there is a lack of empirical research on their effects within the KDF.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The Kenya Defence Forces face a major difficulty in adapting to the shifting needs of a multigenerational workforce while maintaining a conventional, disciplined organizational culture, especially with relation to Reciprocal Mentoring. Prior research has often overlooked the nuanced significance of generational dynamics in favor of operational readiness and gender inclusion (Ombati, 2019). Therefore, this study attempted to bridge this gap by investigating how KDF performance is affected by reciprocal mentoring and considering organizational culture as a significant moderating factor.

## 3. Literature Review

### A. Reciprocal Mentoring and Performance

Reciprocal mentoring (RM) goes beyond traditional, top-down mentorship by establishing a mutually-beneficial relationship where senior and junior staff members act as mentors and mentees. This strategy acts as a conduit for top authorities to understand contemporary communication

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techniques, new technologies, and the evolving motivations of younger generations. Additionally, it provides career counseling, institutional understanding, and critical tactical experience to junior staff members (Murphy, 2012). In military contexts, reciprocal mentoring is crucial for fostering interpersonal respect, strengthening unit cohesion, and bridging generational divides. The relationship between performance and reciprocal mentoring is supported by empirical research. In a study of the Swedish Armed Forces, Lundgren et al. (2024) discovered that units with robust reciprocal mentoring procedures had noticeably greater levels of innovation and adaptive performance. Moreover, cross-generational mentoring also improved leadership readiness, readiness, and morale in the U.S. Navy setting (Bates & Mathews, 2021). According to Mkhize and Moeti (2022), reciprocal mentoring initiatives in the South African Police Service decreased internal strife and increased operational effectiveness in the African environment. However, a significant contextual gap exists in the previous studies that explored geographical regions that are significantly different from the Kenyan military setting.

### B. Performance in Military Contexts

The first measure of performance, organizational effectiveness, is the capacity to optimally employ available resources while completing tasks efficiently (Cedeno, 2022). The second performance indicators, team cohesion, refers to bonds of respect, trust, and dedication required for collective effort, especially in difficult circumstances, and is crucial to adequate performance in combat settings (Bekesiene & Smaliukiene, 2022). According to Nindl et al. (2018), mission readiness, the third performance indicator, is the capacity of individuals and units to deploy and execute tasks effectively while integrating mental and physical agility. The final indicator, organizational stability, is the ability to maintain steady operations and retain employees despite internal and external challenges (Ilyin et al., 2021).

### C. Organizational Culture as a Moderator

In military contexts, organizational culture, which is characterized as the common beliefs, customs, and behaviors that direct behavior, is an especially potent moderator (Soeters, 2021). The open communication and vulnerability necessary for successful reciprocal mentorship may be suppressed by a culture that places a strong emphasis on strict hierarchy and blind obedience. On the other hand, a culture that strikes a balance between tradition and inclusion, discipline and flexibility, can foster a "psychologically safe" atmosphere in which information is readily shared across generations (Edmondson, 2018). The moderating role of culture is demonstrated by studies showing that multigenerational efforts are most successful in units with inclusive and participative cultures (Molefe & Gasa, 2023). For instance, Karanja and Lumumba (2022) found that the rigid, hierarchical structures of Kenyan public sector institutions made it difficult to establish flexible leadership and mentorship programs. As a result, the relationship between performance and reciprocal mentorship is complex and influenced by the organization's cultural readiness

to adopt reciprocal mentoring initiatives.

## 4. Methodology

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Furthermore, a cross-sectional survey was employed in the primary quantitative phase to evaluate the hypotheses. The target population consisted of uniformed personnel stationed at Isiolo Barracks, a significant KDF location. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across military branches (Army, Air Force, Navy) and leadership levels (Top, Middle, Tactical, Servicemen). Using Yamane's (1967) formula, a sample size of 262 was determined from a population of 763. The 193 completed questionnaires that were successfully returned yielded a 74% response rate. Data on performance, organizational culture, and reciprocal mentorship were collected using a 5-point Likert scale in a standardized questionnaire. Reliability was confirmed by the fact that every Cronbach's Alpha score was greater than 0.7. The PROCESS macro for SPSS was utilized to test for moderation, and quantitative data was evaluated using multiple regression analysis, correlation, and descriptive statistics (Hayes, 2018). The following regression model was tested:

$$Y(\text{Performance}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{Reciprocal Mentoring}) + \varepsilon$$

Subsequently, moderation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro to test the interaction effect:

$$Y(\text{Performance}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{Reciprocal Mentoring}) + \beta_2 (\text{Culture}) + \beta_3 (\text{RM} * \text{Culture}) + \varepsilon$$

## 5. Findings

Demographic analysis indicated a primarily male (83.7%) and young workforce, with 64.7% of respondents being below 30 years. Diverse viewpoints were ensured by the sample's representation of a range of grades and services. A moderate degree of agreement was indicated by the mean scores for reciprocal mentorship statements, which varied from 2.912 to 3.254. "Organizational facilitation of intergenerational consultation" earned the lowest (2.912), while the statement on "two-way knowledge transmission" had the highest mean (3.254). Significant variation in experiences among units was indicated by high standard deviations (e.g., 2.111 for one question).

### A. Hypothesis Testing

*H01: Reciprocal mentoring has no significant effect on performance in the Kenya Defence Forces.*

The results showed a statistically significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.468$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ). Consequently, the null hypothesis (H03) was rejected. This implies that an increase of one unit in reciprocal mentorship was associated with a 0.468-unit improvement in organizational performance, while all other factors remained constant.

*H02: Organizational culture does not moderate the relationship between multigenerational strategies (reciprocal*

mentoring) and performance.

The analysis revealed a significant positive moderating effect (Interaction term  $\beta = 0.8339$ ,  $p = 0.0187$ ), therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The conclusion that organizational culture acts as a moderator is supported by the fact that units with a supportive, flexible, and inclusive culture have significantly higher positive benefits of reciprocal mentorship on performance.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusions

This study offers strong proof that organizational effectiveness inside the KDF is significantly influenced by reciprocal mentorship. Specifically, facilitating two-way information sharing between generations improves operational performance, team cohesion, and overall institutional resilience, as indicated by the positive coefficient ( $\beta=0.468$ ). This is consistent with international military research that emphasizes mentoring as a key component of adaptability (Round, 2021). Additionally, KDF's performance improvements from reciprocal mentorship are dependent on a cultural climate that values openness, mutual respect, and learning, as seen by the substantial interaction effect ( $\beta=0.8339$ ). The significantly low scores for organizational encouragement and psychological safety show that an overly strict or hierarchical culture might stifle the very contacts that reciprocal mentoring seeks to foster. Furthermore, organizational culture largely determines the effectiveness of reciprocal mentoring, which is the catalyst for performance enhancement. The KDF's strong, common culture of discipline and dedication is a strength, but it needs to be intentionally used to establish psychological safety for more superior performance outcomes.

## 7. Recommendations

The study findings provided the basis for the following recommendations:

- Institutionalize Structured Reciprocal Mentoring: KDF should go beyond ad hoc mentoring by creating a structured, command-approved program. Clear goals should be established for this program, along with senior and junior staff from various functional areas paired together, time set aside for mentoring activities, and integration of involvement into leadership performance reviews.
- Develop an Inclusive Organizational Culture: KDF leadership needs to take the initiative to promote an inclusive culture that strikes a balance between discipline and diversity. Emotional intelligence-focused leadership training, the establishment of secure routes for upward feedback, and the recognition of units that effectively exhibit intergenerational cooperation can assist in achieving required cultural change.
- Cultural Sensitivity Training: KDF leadership should make it mandatory for all levels of employees to get instruction on how values, motivation, and

communication vary throughout generations. Stereotypes will be broken down, empathy will grow, and a shared understanding will be established, all of which will contribute to more fruitful mentoring relationships.

## 8. Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies should employ a longitudinal methodology to track the long-term impacts of reciprocal mentorship programs on performance metrics. Future research should also expand the geographic scope to include other barracks and specialized units across Kenya in order to increase the generalizability of the findings. Finally, additional research is needed to ascertain if specific organizational culture elements, such as learning orientation and psychological safety, have the greatest impacts on the success of intergenerational programs.

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