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THE INFLUENCE OF SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE:
MEDIATING ROLE OF INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Situational Leadership, Intellectual Stimulation, Sustainable Performance and Higher Education	The situational leadership trait emphasizes the need to adapt leadership style based upon competence and maturity of followers towards particular task at hand. This adaptability may lead to greater employees' performance and institutional outcomes. Whereas, intellectual stimulation, as element of transformational leadership, involves inspiring followers to think creatively and critically examine existing challenging over innovations. This study aims to examine mediating role of intellectual stimulation in relationship between situational leadership and sustainable performance in the higher educational context by collecting data from teachers hailing from higher education institutions KP, Pakistan by using survey approach to explore diverse nature of relationships. The results confirmed existence of positive association and significant partial mediation in reaching the conclusion and making suitable decisions to contribute the existing knowledge from new perspectives. In this regard, some recommendations have been extracted from findings that may guide teachers, policy-makers and institutions for revisiting the phenomena in tailor-made format for ensuring the leadership role in sustainable performance over intellectual stimulation in contemporary competitive environment.
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INTRODUCTION

In organizational behavior, leadership has been confirmed as leading phenomenon for sustainable performance long-term success. In this regard, focus has shifted towards understanding that how different leadership styles affect not only instant outcomes but also sustainability of organizational performance (Khan & Nouman, 2025). In this context, situational leadership has gained important focus that underlines the need for adapting leadership style as situations demand (Yovita, Mulia &

Saori, 2024). Similarly, sustainable performance is the ability of organizations to sustain advanced performances, adapting to changes and continuously improving by considering the environmental, social, and economic factors (Mouri, Swadip, Mahmood & Biswas, 2022). This flexibility allows leaders to influence the performance in diverse ways depending on factors like nature of tasks, maturity of employees and environment (Lado, Fanggidae & Timmuneno, 2019). The intellectual stimulation inspires employees to think critically, follow the norms, and explore innovative ways for doing things by improving performance in terms of sustainability (Khan & Rooh, Naveed, 2022). Thus, situational leadership, through intellectual stimulation inspires employees to realize the strategic objectives, chasing tasks and ensure sustainable performance overwhelmed at the organizational success.

In educational context, no single leadership style is suitable for all situations, therefore leaders who are adapting styles as per team needs can foster higher engagement, motivation, and productivity, that ultimately contributes to improved performances (Iqbal & Piwowar, 2022). The literature revealed that leaders should assess the progress (ability & commitment) of teams and adjust their leadership behaviors (directive & supportive) accordingly to ensure the sustainable performance (Ulandari, Hinggo & Zaki, 2023). Thus, when it comes to sustainable performance, situational leadership can boost institutional ability to adapt towards customers' demands, varying market conditions, and technological advancements (Pristanti, Suradii & Malikun, 2022). By fostering an environment where leaders can tailor this approach, institutions are likely to realize long-term success and resilience. In context of sustainable performance, the intellectual stimulation becomes important because it inspires continuous learning and adaptation (Huo, Arslan & Ahmed, 2023). In this connection, by promoting the culture of intellectual engagement, the leaders can inspire employees to question the traditional practices, contribute innovative ideas and ultimately find solutions to complex problems to ensure the desired sustainability in competitive environment for anticipated success.

In higher educational context, the motivated employees are considered as competitive, innovative and empowered for contributing towards positive changes overwhelmed at success. The situational leader is effective in meeting the employees' genuine needs thus, fostering conducive environment suitable for the sustainability and successes (Hidayat, Hardhienata & Patras, 2020). Through intellectual stimulation, leaders not only inspire workforces but provide them with intellectual space to explore the innovative solutions to challenges, making it easier to improve and sustain performances (Khan & Saqib, Rehan & Hamid, 2020). The situational leadership over intellectual stimulation not only influences the employees' creativity and motivation, but overall institutional innovation (Wijaya, Widayati & Rahmayanti, 2018). This mechanism helps institutions to avoid stagnation and remain flexible in the face of changing situations. This in turn, helps in determining insights into how leaders can enhance creative capacities by fostering an environment conducive to long-term performance sustainability (Qaisar & Piwowar, 2022). In this drive, the findings may have implications for leadership, employees beneath and institutions for creating more innovative, inspired, agile, dynamic and sustainable performance in the face of complex and ever-changing competitive environments.

Objectives & Hypotheses

1. There is significant association among situational leadership, intellectual stimulation and sustainable performance in higher education context (H₁).
2. There is significant influence of situational leadership and intellectual stimulation upon the sustainable performance in higher education context (H₂).
3. There is significant mediating role of intellectual stimulation to link situational leadership & sustainable performance higher educational context (H₃).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The education plays fundamental role in shaping individuals, and societies, serves as foundation for personal growth, social cohesion, cultural advancement and economic development. It provides necessary knowledge, critical thinking skills, and practical experiences to prepare students for the leadership roles in various spheres including education section (Darwish & Mahmoud, 2021). The leadership plays vital role in progress and success of educational systems. The effective leadership in not only drives academic excellence but also influences the development of students, educators and community (Iqbal & Piwowar, 2022). In this regard, different leadership traits and styles are widely examined in diverse situations and context (Khan & Nouman, 2025), still, transformational and situational through support of ethical and responsible traits are leading phenomena that are operative behind the successful execution of the educational strategies (Rahadiyan, Triatmanto & Respati, 2019). The situational leaders inspire individuals towards shared tasks, fostering sense of determination and direction over strategic decisions aligned with institutional norms and values (Ruslan, Bukman & Happy, 2020). Thus, leaders are more overwhelmed toward sustainability and success in institutions.

The situational leadership is effective in dynamic and diverse circumstances to navigate complex academic, administrative, and interpersonal linkages in managing stakeholders (faculty, students, & external partners) (Nasser & Aini, 2016). The ability to modify leadership trait in response to changing situations can develop higher engagement and performance, as essential for ensuring efficiency, innovation and sustainable performances in the institutions (Dey, Mahmood, Uddin & Biswas, 2022). The leaders are required to maintain excellence in teaching, research, and student outcomes while the institutions are required to respond to external changes like alignment with market demands, governmental policies, technological advancements (Sani, Fadi, Fatma & Babu, 2022). The situational leaders over flexibility and resilience are active in cultivating the situation for adaptation, continuous learning, and development crucial for prolonged success (Yovita, Mulia & Saori, 2024). The leadership requires abilities to inspire their subordinates to show the flexibility and resilience for realizing the desired outcomes while chasing the strategic tasks and assigned responsibilities (Nasser & Aini, 2016), that are vital for determining the intellectual stimulation for effective sustainability.

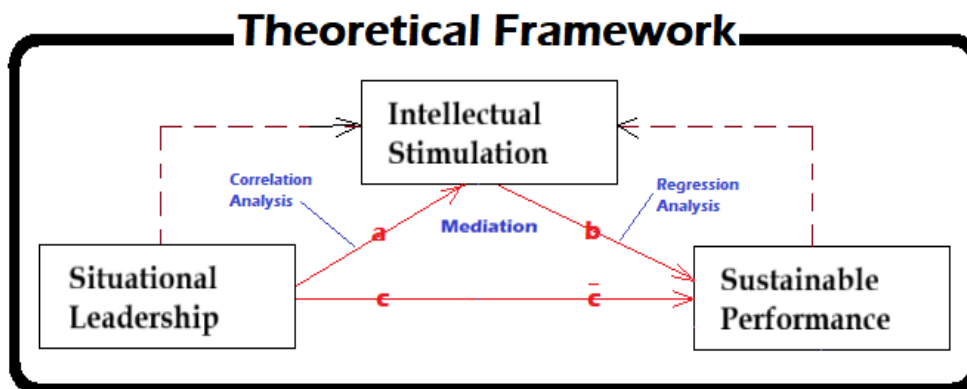
The intellectual stimulation is a leadership trait that is recognized for its critical role in inspiring the teachers to think critically by creating new information for problem-solving through creativity for ensuring innovative teaching practices and academic precision thereby considering the norms and values of institutions (Muthimi, Kilika & Kinyua, 2020). The intellectual stimulation has been

considered as significant predictor of sustainable performance as intellectually inspired teachers are highly inspired towards assigned tasks by performing their roles in producing conducive environment to realizing the desired leading outcomes (Haseeb, Suppramaniam & Subramaniam, 2021). The leadership in this situation is important for encouraging the environment of trust and commitment to motivate the teachers to think independently and act dependably for driving the productivity, excellence and sustainability (Khan & Nouman, 2025). The intellectual stimulation helps the leadership and employees to ensure engagement and empowerment through long-term performance, motivation and dedication to ensure culture of effective teaching, creative learning and innovative research overwhelmed at institutional ranking and sustainability (Ganga, Sikalieh & Linge, 2017), thereby guaranteeing the dynamic pathways in a journey from the survival toward desired developments.

The sustainable performance is the ability of institution and employees for ensuring environment that pivots around the leadership situational skills to take suitable and decisions aligned with the institutional objectives and employees' demands for ensuring desired outcomes (Chavez, Yu, Song & Nakara, 2022). The leaders are required to adjust their attitudes and behaviors as situations demands and take suitable actions for developing positive consequences aligned with institutional strategic objectives for sustainable success (Bass, Avoilio, Jung & Berson, 2008). The situational leaders are effective in ensuring commitment and competence of the employees towards strategic tasks where resilience, willingness and motivation acts as leading facilitators in transforming the efforts towards success (Nasser & Aini, 2016). The adaptability, empowerment, and motivation are significant predictors for providing mechanism for considering the diverse tasks through strategic abilities for confirming strong academic culture towards sustainability (Khan & Nouman, 2025). The intellectual stimulation has been considered as significant facilitator in linking leadership and sustainable performance for ensuring constant perfections in academic sustainability and success in higher education.

The sustainable performance is significantly nurtured over engagement and motivation aligned with commitment towards desired determinations to ensure innovative teaching and leading from diverse dimensions for translating the leadership efforts from survival to development in conducive environments (Jawaad & Zafar, 2020). The situation leadership through intellectual stimulation is important to guarantee the excellence and innovation over sustainable performance for promoting innovative thinking and stimulating intellectual curiosity towards desired outcomes (Qaisar & Piwowar, 2022). The sustainable performance is significant predictor of sustainability and success as it ensures the culture of empowerment and motivation for guaranteeing academic productivity and innovative research over sustainability and intellectual stimulation (Pristanti, Suradii & Malikun, 2022). The blend of situational leadership and intellectual stimulation can significantly impact the long-term success of higher education institutions by fostering flexible and innovative academic environment (Ulandari, Hinggo & Zaki, 2023), leaders contribute toward sustainability of institution performance across research, teaching and engagement for ensuring desired leading outcomes for success.

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design of current study is quantitative in order to examine relationships among the research variables like situational leadership, intellectual stimulation & sustainable performance in higher education context by adapting the positivist approach by collecting data from the faculty hailing from higher educational institutions in KP, Pakistan. The research design and philosophical considerations are significant for providing logical backing and technical support to theoretical framework for ensuring systematic outcomes in methodological justification (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). The survey approach was used to access the population over sample, as sampling helps in saving the resources and ensure the generalizability in outcomes. The collection of data and its analysis are significant techniques that helps in collecting and analyzing facts and extracting the desired information for reaching the conclusion (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). A sample of 322 was selected through statistical formula for collecting data over structured questionnaire adapted from the previous research studies (Yamani, 1967). The results provide significant information for extracting the required facts and figures for reaching out the conclusions and making the suitable decisions along with the provision of some recommendations to the policy-makers as well as future research studies.

RESULTS OF STUDY

The of current study are presented in this section containing descriptive and testing of hypotheses in extracting the desired outcomes and reaching the conclusion. The results provide significant data in analyzing the hypothesized relationship and reaching the decisions about acceptance as well as rejection of hypotheses,

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Descriptive Statistics			
		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Situational Leadership	322	1.30	4.80	3.1971	.75908
Intellectual Stimulation	322	1.70	4.70	3.3376	.68010
Sustainable Performance	322	1.63	4.70	3.3297	.61987
Valid N(listwise)	322				

Table 2 Correlation Analysis (H1)

		Correlations		
		[1]	[2]	[3]
Situational Leadership [1]	Pearson Correlation	1	.492**	.671**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	322	322	322
Intellectual Stimulation [2]	Pearson Correlation	.492**	1	.528**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	322	322	322
Sustainable Performance [3]	Pearson Correlation	.671**	.528**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	322	322	322

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

The correlation procedures provide information about association among situational leadership, intellectual stimulation and sustainable performance in higher educational context to confirm the strength and direction in association for reaching the decision. The results revealed the positive and significant association among variables like situational leadership and sustainable performance ($R = .671$ & $P = .000$), situational leadership and intellectual stimulation ($R = .492$ & $P = .000$), and intellectual stimulation and sustainable performance ($R = .528$ & $P = .000$), and hypothesis was accepted from results.

Table 3 Regression Analysis (M-Summary) (H2)

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SEE	F	Sig.
1	.709 ^a	.502	.499	.43861	161.061	.000 ^b

Table 4 Regression Analysis (Coefficients) (H2)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.117	.133		8.425	.000
	Situational Leadership	.443	.037	.543	11.966	.000
	Intellectual Stimulation	.238	.041	.262	5.767	.000
a. Predictors: Situational Leadership & Intellectual Stimulation						
b. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Performance						

The regression procedure was used to examine the prediction of sustainable performance through situational leadership and intellectual stimulation to form the cause-&-effect relationship among research variables. The results revealed that there is 50.2% variance in sustainable performance is due situational leadership and intellectual stimulation with the significant individual influence of predictors on criterion variable like situational leadership (coefficient value = .443 & P -value = .000), and intellectual stimulation (coefficient value = .238 & P -value = .000) which thus confirmed the significant influence of independent and mediating variables on dependent variable of current

research study and hypothesis was accepted based upon the results as obtained from the regression procedure outcomes.

Table 5 Mediation Analysis (H3)

Criterion	Predictors	R	R-Square	Coefficient	P-Value
Path a					
Intellectual Stimulation	Constant	.4915	.2416		
	Situational Leadership			.4404	.0000
Path b & c					
Sustainable Performance	Constant	.7088	.5024		
	Situational Leadership			.4432	.0000
	Intellectual Stimulation			.2384	.0000
Path c					
Sustainable Performance	Constant	.6712	.4506		
	Situational Leadership			.5481	.0000

The mediation procedure was used to confirm mediating role of intellectual stimulation in linking situational leadership and sustainable performance higher educational context through four paths pf mediation while examining the direct relationship between predictor and criterion and indirect relationship between predictor and criterion through mediator. The results of mediation procedure provide significant information about all the paths that ensure significance over coefficient values and p-values and confirm partial mediating role of intellectual stimulation in linking situational leadership and sustainable performance due to decrease in coefficient value from (.5481) in direct relationship to (.4432) in indirect relationship and thus hypothesis was accepted from mediation procedure outcomes by confirming facilitating role of intellectual stimulation in linking situational leadership and performance .

DISCUSSION

The situational leadership has significant phenomenal and interactional role toward many factors like innovation, motivation, engagement and prolonged commitment that are central for chasing institutional success. The leaders, who are flexible and accommodative in responding to genuine needs of employees are able to realize the desired sustainability through commitment, engagement and performance (Khan & Nouman, 2025). The situational leaders are effective in ensuring the inspiring autonomy and promoting innovation wherein sustainable performance acts as significant phenomenon that pivots around the desired sustainability (Ulandari, Hinggo & Zaki, 2023). The leadership is vital in responding to changing environments that is supported through intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation for bringing situations at par towards required outcomes (Khan & Saqib, Rehan & Hamid, 2020). The situational leaders are helpful in driving institutional resilience and adaptation in competitive situations for ensuring the alignment between sustainable performance and long-term academic excellence (Pristanti, Suradii & Malikun, 2022). The leaders are active in managing environment of trust and commitment for confirming long-term objectives for realizing success.

The situational leaders inspire the faculty to think creatively and act strategically by fostering the innovation and driving the stimulation for continuous improvements to enhance productivities and improve engagement and satisfaction (Iqbal & Piwowar, 2022). The situational leaders provide professional development chances to employees that are vital for academic quality and excellence in higher education in the particular context (Ruslan, Bukman & Happy, 2020). The situational leadership is effective in cutting-edge competition towards the sustainability and success through stronger reputation and teamwork over actual and leading cultures and intellectual engagement (Huo, Arslan & Ahmed, 2023). The responsiveness and competitiveness are active parameters that contributes toward prolonged sustainability for ensuring conducive environment for institutional reputation and teaching effectiveness in higher education towards lasting impact on performance sustainability (Khan & Nouman, 2025). The critical thinking and intellectual curiosity are vital for the innovation and engagement through sustainable performance for realizing the diverse leading outcomes that remained responsive and relevant to the evolving needs of students, societies as well as stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

The findings of current study revealed that situational leadership can influence significantly long-term commitments like faculty engagement, academic excellence, adaptability, and sustainability in different situations and contexts. In higher education institutions, situational leadership is vital in determining sustainable performance through effective behaviors and conducive environments culminates at institutional effectiveness and faculty satisfaction. The findings of study revealed that situational leadership promotes empowerment for ensuring innovation and creativity for long-term sustainability and success wherein sustainable performance and intellectual stimulation supports the notion for competitive advantages. The situational leadership ensures adaptability as well as resilience that are essential for ensuring that the institution remains competitive, relevant, and responsive to societal and educational shifts from survival to developments. The results of this study confirmed existence of association among the variables (situational leadership, intellectual stimulation & sustainable performance), significant influence and partial mediation that paves the ways towards extraction of certain recommendations for the policy-makers, employees and higher educational institutions.

Recommendations

1. The institutions are required to conduct training programs for developing leadership traits and employees' competencies for ensuring responsiveness in academic environment towards improved sustainable performance.
2. The institutions are required to inspire academic leaders to actively engage in intellectual stimulation by promoting innovation, critical thinking, and creativity in problem-solving for ensuring academic excellence.
3. The leadership, intellectual stimulation and sustainable performance are vital for dynamic academic culture that is significant for ensuring attractiveness and prolonged sustainability in higher educational institutions.

4. The future studies should focus on longitudinal research to assess the long-term effects for deeper insights into their ongoing impact upon academic outcome, faculty engagement, and institutional resilience and success.

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