

The Role of Organizational Learning in Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Universities in Kenya



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ABSTRACT

Purpose – The general purpose of this research was to assess the role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. Specifically, the study examined the role of individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper adopted a cross-sectional survey design to generate quantitative data to test the research hypotheses. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 57 universities out of a target population of 67 universities accredited to undertake university education in Kenya. Primary data was collected by use of self administered questionnaires which were distributed through drop and pick method to a total sample size of 285 academic leaders selected by purposive sampling. A total of 215 complete responses were used for analyses. Data analysis was by descriptive statistics and inferential statistics using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. Simple and multiple regression analyses were used for hypotheses testing.

Findings – This research provides empirical evidence on the links between organizational learning and sustainable competitive advantage. Results revealed that organizational learning, individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning play significant role in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. The research concluded that organizational learning forms the basis for building sustainable competitive advantage.

Research limitations/implications – This research has some important limitations that need to be taken into consideration. The study used a cross-sectional survey design with only quantitative measures which can be improved upon by longitudinal studies with mixed quantitative and quantitative measures.

Practical implications Paper type Research paper The research has significantly attempted to expand extant literature in strategic management, organizational learning and sustainable competitive advantage by making several significant contributions.

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1. Introduction

As the higher education world over is undergoing rapid transformation in the face of changing environmental dynamics, all higher education institutions are required to build sustainable competitive advantage. On a global perspective, Păcuraru (2012) and Harrison-Walker (2009) suggested that higher education institutions have to deal with the concurrent challenges of managing expansion of the student body, with the accompanying required increases in facilities, staff, lectures, and courses, maintaining and improving the quality of teaching, facilities, and curriculum, obtaining sustainable funding, improving labor market attractiveness of students, increasing managerial and staff capacities, and innovation in both teaching and managing the organization. On the same account, Marginson and van der Wende (2007) have also observed that public higher education institutions are confronted with a big challenge in finding a balance between traditional academic operation and the new but increasingly dominating market-driven dimension of global competition. Eckel (2007), Jiang (2008), and Mazzarol and Souta (2008) emphasized that as a result of the global competition, overall in the world public higher education institutions are increasingly characterized by the new dimension of commoditization where education has been classified as a marketable service in a competitive environment, because education market is assumed the same as a normal market. Marginson (2007) argued that public higher education institutions have to face competition in respect to obtaining governmental and/or research funds, which implies the possession of specific qualities of teaching and research in the institution and in attracting students, which implies specific marketing capability in gaining recognition of their quality.

In Kenya, universities have also experienced various changes in their external environment, prompting responses from players in the higher education sub-sector with the objective of mitigating risks and taking advantage of

opportunities strategic management plays a key role in positioning them in their quest to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. In large part, public universities introduced 'parallel programmes alongside 'regular' programmes attended by government-subsidized students to augment anorexic allocations from the government (Wangenge-Ouma, 2012). Due to the fiercely competitive education market which is driven by global competition, strategic management plays a key role in positioning higher education institutions in their quest to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Mathooko & Ogutu, 2014).

Organizational learning (OL) is one of the most important sources of sustainable competitive advantage (SCA). Oyeniyi (2011) found that OL is positively related to SCA in Nigeria. Over the last decade there has been a growing interest in examining OL as a source of sustainable competitive advantage for the firm (Graham & Nafukho, 2007; Kanya, Ntayi, & Ahiauzu, 2010; Njuguna, 2009; Saru, 2007). As a major resource of the firm, OL is considered by scholars to foster competitive advantage (Curado, 2006; Saru, 2007). With increased competition in this era of globalization and knowledge economy, the role of OL in promoting competitive advantage has become important for the survival and sustainable growth of firms in both developed and developing countries (Kanya, Ntayi, & Ahiauzu, 2011). However, the review of extant literature reveals that there have been little empirical studies linking OL and sustainable competitive advantage as most of the studies have at best concentrated on the relationship between OL and firm performance (Morgan & Turnell, 2003; Murray, 2003; O'Keefe & Harington, 2001). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to fill existing gaps in the strategic management literature by providing an analysis of the role of organizational learning and sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the deliberate move by the Government of Kenya to expand university education through the creation of more universities and expansion of programmes offered to get industrialized by the year 2030 in line with the Kenya Vision 2030, Kenyan universities continue to be ranked low internationally as only University of Nairobi and Strathmore University were ranked among top 50 out of 12000 institutions in Africa in survey conducted by the Webometrics in 2011 and no Kenyan university was ranked among the top 1000 in a survey conducted by the Academic Ranking of World Universities in 2012 thus the competitiveness of Kenyan universities has become a point of concern following these low positions in ranking (Kaluyu, M'chebere, & Gichunge, 2014). Furthermore, literature increasingly considers OL as a basis for gaining a SCA and a key variable in the enhancing of organizational performance (Bontis *et al.*, 2002; Brockmand & Morgan, 2003; Dimovski & Škerlavaj, 2005; Jashapara, 2003; Kanya *et al.*, 2011; Njuguna, 2009). However, there is paucity of research examining the role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities especially in developing countries. The background provided indicates a research gap that can be addressed by answering the research question below: what is the role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya?

1.2 Objective of the Study

In light with the identified problem, this research was guided by one general objective and three specific objectives.

1.2.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to assess the role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

- 1) To examine the role of individual level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.
- 2) To establish the role of group learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.
- 3) To determine the role of organizational level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

1) *Hypotheses 1*

H₀₁: There is no significant role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

H₁₁: There is a significant role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

2) *Hypotheses 2*

H₀₂: There is no significant role of individual level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

H₁₂: There is a significant role of individual level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

3) *Hypotheses 3*

H₀₃: There is no significant role of group level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

H₁₃: There is a significant role of group level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

4) *Hypotheses 4*

H₀₄: There is no significant role of organizational level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

H₁₄: There is a significant role of organizational level learning in sustainable

competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Generally, this research can enrich and contribute a theory especially in the science of strategic management that has a significant role in an organization that undergoes organizational changes. The findings can help management to intensify initiatives to encourage greater understanding and acceptance of the concept of organizational learning that boosts sustainable competitive advantage in the industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

In the development of the structural relationships among the variables of the study, the Resource-Based View of the firm theory and the Knowledge based theory were integrated.

2.1.1 Resource-Based View Theory

In the strategic management literature, the resource-based view of the firm (RBV) has been considered as one of the most and fast growing research area in the last few decades. The RBV is a theory in strategic management literature that has been applied in management research to analyze and explain resources of a firm that have the potential to create and sustain competitive advantage and, in turn, superior performance among firms (Barney, 2007; Barney, 2001; Barney & Arian, 2001; Barney & Hesterly, 2010; Sheehan & Foss, 2007). The RBV argues that the organizational success is determined by internal resources. The RBV aspires to explain the internal sources of a firm's sustained competitive advantage (Kraaijenbrink, Spender, & Groen, 2010). Therefore, the RBV is a suitable theory to explain the role of organizational learning in building sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya through innovatively delivering superior value to customers and use of

resources such as individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning.

2.1.2 Knowledge-based View Theory

The Knowledge-based view (KBV) has been argued by some researchers to be an outgrowth of resource-based view theory where the concept of resources is prolonged to have intangible assets, in particular, knowledge-based resources (Darroch, 2005; Sandhawalia & Dalcher, 2011; Subramaniam & Youndi, 2005). The KBV can be a beneficial framework to develop a firm innovation in an effective way (Diaz-Daiz, Aguir-Diaz, & DeSaa-Perez, 2008). Therefore, the variables used in this study have been underpinned theoretically by KBV through generating and applying various types of knowledge. Consequently, another relevant theory that helps significantly towards realizing the important role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya is the KBV.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is a diagrammatical representation that shows the relationship between dependent variable and independent variables. In the study, sustainable competitive advantage is classified as dependent variable, while organizational learning: individual level learning, group level learning and organizational level learning are classified as the independent variables. The conceptual framework for this study attempts to explain an integrative view of the role of organizational learning (individual level learning, group level learning and organizational level learning) in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya and provide strategic guidelines for both public and private universities in Kenya. Therefore, a conceptual framework is demonstrated as shown in Figure 1.

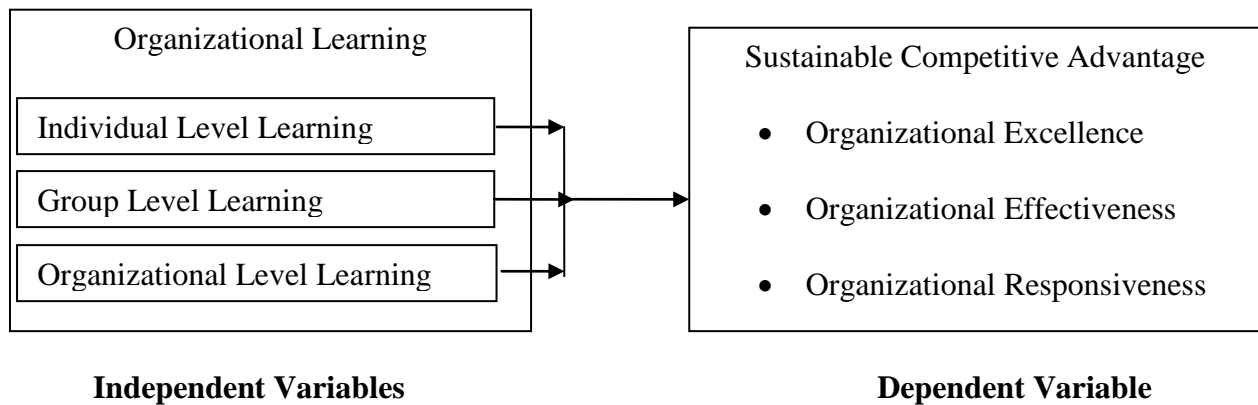


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.3 Organizational Learning

With increased competition in this era of globalization and knowledge economy, the role of organizational learning (OL) in promoting sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) has become important for the survival and sustainable growth of firms in both developed and developing countries. OL has been conceptualized as the ability to make sense of the environment, and develop new understandings which ultimately manifest itself through internal and external organizational actions (Moore, 2007; Dimitriadis, 2005). Nevertheless, the concept of OL stretches much farther and is embedded also in different schools of thought, including contingency theory, organizational development, industrial economy, information theory and system dynamics, systems theory, management science, production and operation management, social anthropology, sociology, psychology, and organizational theory (Škerlavaj & Dimovski, 2007; Škerlavaj, Song, & Lee, 2010). Consequently, OL has emerged as one of the most promising concepts in strategic management literature in late 1980s in relation to the concept of competitive advantage (Škerlavaj & Dimovski, 2007). There is a general agreement that OL is a multidimensional concept (Chiva, Alegre, & Lapiedra, 2007; Jerez-Gomez, Céspedes-Lorente, & Valle-Cabrera, 2004; Tohidi, Seyedaliakbar, & Mandegari, 2012). Consistent with Chiva *et al.* (2007), this current study defines OL as the organizational orientation to learn or as an organizational capability that facilitates the OL process (Camps & Luna-Aroca,

2012; Jerez-Gomez *et al.*, 2004). Previous studies have argued that OL consists of three dimensions: individual level learning, group level learning and organizational learning level (Bontis, Crossan, & Hulland, 2002; Camps & Luna-Aroca, 2012; Chiva *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, consistent with Bontis *et al.* (2002), Camps & Luna-Aroca (2012) and Chiva *et al.* (2007) the current research views OL as a multidimensional concept consisting of three dimensions: individual level learning, group level learning and organizational level learning.

2.3.1 Individual Level Learning

Bontis *et al.* (2002) maintained that the individual level learning refers to the individuals' competencies and motivation to learn and is reflected in some individual behaviors such as experimentation, generation of new insights, be aware of critical issues that affect ones work, have a sense of pride and ownership in one's work, etc. This implies that the individual level learning refers to the process by which individuals generate new insights and knowledge from existing tacit or explicit information and knowledge.

2.3.2 Group Level Learning

Kiessling, Richey, Meng, and Dabic (2009) stated that the group level learning involves individuals transferring their individual knowledge within a group so that all members develop a shared understanding. Bontis *et al.* (2002) argued that group level learning involves dialog and joint action, which are elements that describe the

effective work of groups, are crucial in knowledge transfer within a group.

2.3.3 Organizational Level Learning

The organizational level learning has been defined as the processes of embedding individual and group learning into the non-human aspects of the organization including systems, structures, strategy, culture and procedures (Bontis *et al.*, 2002; Chiva *et al.*, 2007). Popadiuk and Choo (2006) maintain that although the three levels of learning: individual, group and organizational are distinct, they are interrelated. Therefore, OL occurs when individual and group knowledge is institutionalized in the organization. Literature increasingly considers OL as a basis for gaining a SCA and a key variable in the enhancing of organizational performance (Bontis *et al.*, 2002; Brockmand & Morgan, 2003; Dimovski & Škerlavaj, 2005; Jashapara, 2003). Studies have shown that OL affects competitive advantage (Jashapara, 2003), financial and nonfinancial performance (Bontis *et al.*, 2002; Dimovski & Škerlavaj, 2005), and innovation (Llorens-Montes, Ruiz-Moreno, & Garcia-Morales, 2005). OL is also said to foster innovation and knowledge management and in turn have a complementary or synergistic effect on competitive advantage (Jimenez-Jimenez *et al.*, 2008; Dimitriades, 2005). These relationships seem to suggest that although OL may be important in influencing SCA of universities. However, there is paucity of research examining the role of OL in SCA of universities in Kenya.

2.4 Sustainable Competitive Advantage

The pursuit for SCA has been the primary objective in the study of a firm's competitive strategy and generation of superior profitability (Hill & Jones, 2009). Porter and Kramer (2006) considers the term sustainable as encompassing the protection of resources for longer period of time into the future (Haberberg & Rieple, 2008; Grant, 2010; Thompson *et al.*, 2012). Barney and Hesterly (2010) maintain that in general a firm has

a competitive advantage when it is able to create more economic value than rival firms. Recently, scholars have argued that the concept of SCA can also be understood along the dimensions of durability and limitability (Grant, 2010; Haberberg & Wheelen & Hunger, 2010).

2.4.1 Organizational excellence

Organizational excellence (OE) has been identified by previous research as one of the dimensions of SCA in organizations. For instance, Peters (2010) argued that organizational excellence in execution was, is, wherever, and forever will be sustainable competitive advantage number one. OE has been defined as the state, quality, or condition of excelling; superiority (Arussy, 2008). Recently, Kalsom and Ching (2011) maintained that for public institutions of higher education to strive for academic excellence, it is vital for the institutions to become learning organizations.

2.4.2 Organizational Effectiveness

The SCA of higher education institutions such as universities may be conceptualized in terms of organizational effectiveness (OEF). OEF has been defined as the degree or extent to which organization get close to desired objectives (Wzhen, 2010). From a strategic management standpoint, OEF is the degree to which the composite outputs an organization produces align with the demands of its environment in order to achieve a competitive advantage, and strategic leadership is a primary determinant of this set of outputs (Awang *et al.*, 2015). OEF is related to issues such as the ability of an organization to access and absorb resources and consequently achieve its aims. Ashraf and Kadir (2012) have maintained that OEF is the main concern of all higher education institutes.

2.4.3 Organizational Responsiveness

SCA of universities may be conceptualized in terms of organizational responsiveness (OR). Recent research conducted by Vinayan, Jayashree,

and Marthandan (2012) established that OR as a dimension of SCA. It gives the organization the advantage in the speed and effectiveness of its response to opportunities and threats (Mei, 2012). Generally, OR refers to the inter-individual knowledge exchanges which, in turn influence the ability of the organization to respond to a changing environment in a particular style. It refers to the extent to which a firm rapidly reacts to the changes of business environment in order to seize potential opportunities (Bernardes & Hanna, 2009; Wei, Samiee, & Lee, 2013). It reflects the ability of an organization to respond to its external environment in an appropriate manner. As OR is dependent on the ability of an organization to learn about changes in its market environment (Ketchen & Hult, 2007), it is important for firms to learn quickly about the changes which are fast-paced and difficult to foresee (Bernardes & Hanna, 2009). Therefore, OL would play a critical role in developing OR.

3. Research Methodology

A cross-sectional survey design was carried out so as to generate data to test the research hypotheses. This study was descriptive quantitative in nature, aiming to develop a better understanding of the role of organizational learning in sustainable

competitive advantage from the academic leaders point of view.

3.1 Selection of Sample and Respondents' University Profile

The study was empirical based on the primary data collected from university academic leaders in Kenya in 2016. Stratified random sampling was adopted to select a sample of 57 universities from target population of 67 universities accredited to undertake university education in Kenya according to CUE (2014). On the basis of Field (2006) guidelines, the research covered a minimum of 5 academic leaders per university selected adopting the purposive sampling. In total 285 self administered questionnaires were delivered using the drop and pick method to the academic leaders. The number of usable returned questionnaires was 215 from 43 universities giving valid response rate 75%, a rate that is regarded as good. The Questionnaire was in English, which is the official language in Kenya. A majority of the respondents (85%) were from public chartered universities, (48.8%) were from universities in operation for less than 6 years, (37.2%) were from universities that had 201-500 employees, and (90.7%) were from universities that had less than 25% market share

Table 1: Respondent's University Profile

Variable	Categorization	Frequency	Percent
University Type	Public Chartered University	85	39.5
	Public University Constituent College	30	14.0
	Private Chartered University	55	25.6
	Private University Constituent College	15	7.0
	Institution with Letter of Interim Authority	30	14.0
	Total	215	100.0
Age of University	Less than 6 Years	105	48.8
	6 - 10 Years	5	2.3
	11 - 15 Years	50	23.3
	16 - 20 Years	25	11.6
	More than 20 Years	30	14.0
	Total	215	100.0
Number of Employees in the University	Less than 101 Employees	30	14.0
	101 – 200 Employees	45	20.9

	201 – 300 Employees	80	37.2
	301 – 400 Employees	45	20.9
	More than 500 Employees	15	7.0
	Total	215	100.0
Market Share of the University	25% - 49% Market Share	20	9.3
	Less than 25%	195	90.7
	Total	215	100.0

3.2 Data Processing and Analysis

The statistical package SPSS (version 24.0) was used for data analysis. Two steps of detailed statistical analysis of data were involved. At the first stage, descriptive statistic analysis was performed to extract the mean and standard deviation of underlying study variables organizational learning (individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning) and sustainable competitive advantage (organizational excellence, organizational effectiveness, and organizational responsiveness). At the second stage, simple regression analyses and multiple regression analyses were performed to understand the relationship among these variables.

3.3 Scale and Measurement

This study required developing a multidimensional organizational learning (individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning) measurement scale and a sustainable competitive advantage scale (organizational excellence, organizational effectiveness, and organizational responsiveness). Measurement scales for organizational learning are based on the works of Barba-Aragón, Jiménez-Jiménez and Sanz-Valle (2014) is operationalized with three indicators: individual level learning, group level learning and organizational level learning uses 21 items. Sustainable competitive advantage measurement scales are based on Barney (2007) and Verma and Jayasimha (2014) consisting of 21 items. All item scales are anchored on a five point scale with 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree.

3.4 Validity

Validity is defined as the extent to which the research findings accurately reflect the phenomenon under study. Bryman and Bell (2007) emphasized that validity is the most important criterion for research. In this study the following steps were taken to ensure questionnaire validity: the objectives of the study were defined very carefully, draft questionnaire was pre-tested for content validity, and many questions were used from previous studies that had been used in different cultures, different environments, and at different times, a measure that contributed to construct validity. Saunders *et al.* (2009) noted that the questions used in the data collection instrument must be understood by the participants in the way intended by the researcher, and the answers given by the respondents should be understood by the researcher in the way intended by the respondents. In this study content validity was established by means of a comprehensive review of the literature. It has been suggested that content validity can be established by the comprehensive review of the literature (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Cooper & Schindler, 2008).

3.5 Reliability

The reliability was assessed through calculating Cronbach Alpha (α) values. In the scale reliability, Cronbach Alpha coefficients are 0.749 which was at a minimum acceptable level (Hair, Black, Barry, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). Cronbach Alpha values presented in Table 2 showed a good acceptable-reliability-coefficient.

Table 2: Reliability analysis of Organizational Learning and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Variable	Sub-Variable	n	No of Items	Cronbach alpha (α)	Comments
Organizational Learning	Individual Level Learning	215	21	0.925	Accepted
	Group Level Learning	215	7	0.749	Accepted
	Organizational Level Learning	215	7	0.943	Accepted
Sustainable Competitive Advantage	Organizational Excellence	215	21	0.878	Accepted
	Organizational Effectiveness	215	7	0.914	Accepted
	Organizational Responsiveness	215	7	0.793	Accepted
		215	7	0.860	Accepted
		215	7	0.830	Accepted

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis covered calculating the means and standard deviation scores for all the independent variables and the dependent variable as well as all items in the questionnaire.

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics Organizational Learning

Table 3 presents the results of the descriptive statistics in terms of the means and standard deviations for all items for the organizational learning of universities in Kenya. The results revealed that the mean scores ranged from 3.67 for item suggesting that individuals were able to

break out of traditional mind-sets to see things in new and different ways to 4.13 for the item suggesting that all of their university functions were integrated in serving the needs of our target markets. The individual level learning had the lowest mean score of 3.83 and a standard deviation of 0.459, followed by the group level learning with a mean score of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 0.552, while organizational level learning had the highest mean score of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 0.443. Overall, the organizational learning of universities in Kenya had a mean score of 3.87 and standard deviation of 0.454.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the Organizational Learning

Item Code	Item	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
ILL1	Individuals are able to break out of traditional mind-sets to see things in new and different ways.	215	3.67	.694
ILL2	Individuals feel a sense of pride in their work.	215	3.71	.685
ILL3	Individuals have a clear sense of direction in their work.	215	3.84	.517
ILL4	Individuals generate many new insights.	215	3.97	.178
ILL5	Individuals are aware of the critical issues that affect their work.	215	3.89	.512
ILL6	Individuals feel confident in their work.	215	3.93	.507
ILL7	Individuals feel a sense of accomplishment in what they do.	215	3.80	.825
ILL	Individual Level Learning	215	3.83	.459
GLL1	We have effective conflict resolution when working in groups.	215	3.93	.568
GLL2	Different points of view are encouraged in group work.	215	3.71	.685
GLL3	Groups have the right people involved in addressing the issues.	215	3.93	.674
GLL4	We share our success within the group.	215	3.80	.595
GLL5	In meetings, we seek to understand everyone's point of view.	215	3.84	.631
GLL6	Groups in the university are adaptable.	215	3.80	.595

GLL7	Groups are prepared to rethink decisions when presented with new information.	215	3.87	.712
GLL	Group Level Learning	215	3.84	.552
OLL1	We have a strategy that positions us well for the future.	215	3.87	.664
OLL2	We have the necessary systems to implement our strategy.	215	3.87	.495
OLL3	Our university strategies are driven by our beliefs about how we can create greater value for learners.	215	3.87	.613
OLL4	The organizational structure allows us to work effectively.	215	3.80	.696
OLL5	We have a realistic yet challenging vision for the university.	215	4.03	.542
OLL6	All of our university functions are integrated in serving the needs of our target markets.	215	4.13	.423
OLL7	Our operational procedures allow us to work efficiently.	215	3.97	.599
OLL	Organizational Level Learning	215	3.93	.443
OL	Organizational Learning	215	3.87	.454
Valid n (listwise)		215		

4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Table 4 presents the results of the descriptive statistics in terms of the means and standard deviations for sustainable competitive advantage (organizational excellence, organizational effectiveness, and organizational excellence) of universities in Kenya. The results revealed that organizational responsiveness had the lowest

mean score of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 0.401, followed by organizational effectiveness with a mean score of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 0.455, while organizational excellence had the highest mean score of 3.92 and a standard deviation of 0.356. Overall, the results revealed that sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya had a mean score of 3.88 and standard deviation of 0.349.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for the Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Item Code	Item	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
OE1	University management is excellently capable of achieving sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.93	.507
OE2	University management excellently carries out work through participation and employees interaction in order to build sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.80	.648
OE3	University management excellently selects new university hires subject to experience, competence, and qualification standards in order to build sustainable competitive advantage.	215	4.04	.482
OE4	University management excellently and highly values openness and accepts change in order to build sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.77	.662
OE5	University management and employees excellently carry out their duties with high morale and enthusiasm in order to build sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.87	.613
OE6	University management and employees are excellently aware of achieving a strong linkage among its vision, mission, and objectives in order to build sustainable competitive advantage.	215	4.00	.256

OE7	University management is excellently capable of providing development opportunities in order to build the university's sustainable competitive advantage.	215	4.00	.448
OE	Organizational Excellence	215	3.92	.356
OEF1	We are more effective than our competitors to provide innovative learning to student in order to build the university's sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.76	.803
OEF2	The university's staff turnover was lower than that of the competitors indicating sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.78	.492
OEF3	The university's employee morale is higher than that of the competitors indicating sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.80	.537
OEF4	The university's effective attraction to professionals was higher than that of the competitors indicating sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.99	.599
OEF5	The university's image is better than that of the competitors indicating sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.90	.694
OEF6	The university's growth rate was higher than that of the competitors last year indicating sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.95	.546
OEF7	The university's employee productivity was higher than that of the competitors last year indicating sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.97	.599
OEF	Organizational Effectiveness	215	3.88	.455
OR1	We are faster than our competitors to respond to student complaints in order to build the university's sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.75	.611
OR2	We are faster than our competitors to respond to concerns raised by employees in order to build the university's sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.79	.611
OR3	We are faster than our competitors to access future student needs and respond in time in order to build the university's sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.87	.337
OR4	We are faster than our competitors to respond to changes in technology in order to build the university's sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.80	.648
OR5	We are faster than our competitors to respond to concerns raised by suppliers in order to build the university's sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.77	.555
OR6	We are faster than our competitors to respond to concerns raised by government in order to build the university's sustainable competitive advantage.	215	3.90	.468
OR7	If a major competitor launches an intensive campaign targeted at our students, we would implement a response immediately in order to build the university's sustainable competitive advantage.	215	4.00	.592
ORR	Organizational Responsiveness	215	3.84	.401
SCA	Sustainable Competitive Advantage	215	3.88	.349

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

To test the hypotheses, simple linear regression analysis and multiple regression analysis were used in this research.

3.2.1 Hypothesis 1

In order to test the first hypothesis, simple linear regression analysis was used in this research using sustainable competitive advantage as the dependent variable, and the organizational learning as the predicting variable.

H₀1: There is no significant role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

H₁1: There is a significant role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

Table 5 presents the variables entered/removed when a simple regression analysis between organizational learning and sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya was conducted, illustrating that the model to be tested was $[Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon]$.

Table 5: Variables Entered/Removed^a

Mode	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Organizational Learning ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Competitive Advantage
 b. All requested variables entered.

From the model summary in Table 6, it is clear that the value of R was 0.591, while the value of R² was 0.349, and the value of the adjusted R² was 0.346 indicating that organizational learning can predict and explain approximately 34.6% of the

Table 7: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.130	1	9.130	114.353	.000 ^b
	Residual	17.006	213	.080		
	Total	26.135	214			

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Competitive Advantage
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Learning

Regression Coefficients of the Simple Regression Analysis between Organizational Learning and Sustainable Competitive Advantage of Universities in Kenya

Table 8 presents the coefficients for the role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. From the coefficients table, it is clear that organizational

variation in the sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. Therefore, other factors not studied in the current research predict and explain the remaining 65.4% of the variation in the sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. Consequently, future research should be conducted to discover the other variables.

Table 6: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.591 ^a	.349	.346	.283	2.209

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Learning
 b. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Competitive Advantage

The ANOVA tests whether the model is significantly better than the mean at predicting the outcome variable. The results in Table 7 present the ANOVA. From the ANOVA table, it is clear that the overall standard multiple regression model, $[Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon]$ achieves a high degree of fit, as reflected by an R² of 0.349, $F(1, 213) = 114.353, p < 0.001$.

learning had a positive and significant role in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya ($\beta = 0.591; t = 10.694; p < 0.001$), as a result the H₀1 that posited that there is no significant role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya is rejected while the H₁1 that posited that there is a significant role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya is accepted. Therefore,

conclusion is made that is made that there is a significant role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. The findings are consistent with the results of the study by Akhtar, Khan, and Mujtaba (2013) which showed that organizational learning contribute significantly towards the achievement of competitive advantage. These findings provide support to many researches that have shown that organizational learning affects competitive advantage (Jashapara, 2003), financial and nonfinancial performance (Bontis *et al.*, 2002; Dimovski & Škerlavaj, 2005), and innovation (Llorens-Montes *et al.*, 2005). There are also empirical evidence supporting a positive relation between organizational learning capability and

firm performance (Keskin, 2006; Rhodes, Lok, & Hung, 2008; Camps & Luna-Aroca, 2012). Following the recommendations by Pallant (2007), the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) were used to construct a regression equation, calculate the predicted values for each observation and to express the expected change in the criterion variable for each unit change in predictors. The model [$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$] then becomes [$Y = 2.119 + 0.455 X_1$] suggesting that that taking all factors into account (organizational learning) constant at zero, sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya will be 2.119, and that a unit increase in organizational learning can lead to 0.455 increase in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya

Table 8: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.119	.166		12.793	.000	1.792	2.445		
1 Organizational Learning	.455	.043	.591	10.694	.000	.371	.539	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Competitive Advantage

3.2.1 Hypothesis 2 to Hypothesis 4

In order to test H2, H3, and H4, we conducted a standard multiple regression analysis using sustainable competitive advantage as the dependent variable, and the various components of organizational learning: individual level learning; group level learning and organizational level learning as the predicting variables. The Table 9 shows the independent variables that entered the multiple regression equation (individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning, and the variables that were excluded from entry into the equation, and also refers to the method used and the regression was Enter where the program it turns out that the all the independent variables entered in the multiple linear regression equation,

and none of them was excluded from the multiple regression analysis. Therefore, the multiple regressions model to be tested for the study was:
 $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$

Where:

Y = Sustainable competitive advantage (Dependent variable),

X₁ = individual level learning (Independent variable),

X₂ = group level learning (Independent variable),

X₃ = organizational individual level learning (Independent variable),

β₀ = Constant (coefficient of Y intercept),

β₁ – β₃ = Regression coefficient for each Independent variable,

ε = Error Term (Random or Stochastic Term)

Table 9: Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Organizational Level Learning, Group Level Learning, Individual Level Learning ^b	.	Enter
a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Competitive Advantage			
b. All requested variables entered.			

Before applying the multiple regression analysis in order to testing the study hypothesis the researcher conducted the following tests to ensure the fitness of data for the regression analysis assumptions: Variance Inflation Factory (VIF) Test, and Tolerance Test to ensure there is no high correlation between the independent variables (Multicollinearity), and Skewness Test to ensure the normal distribution of the data, and the Durbin-Watson test to test for the assumption of autocorrelation. When the Durbin-Watson test was performed, the results in Table 9 suggest that the assumption of autocorrelation was met as the value of the Durbin-Watson was 1.926 within the optimal range of between 1.5-2.5 and close to 2.0 suggesting that there was no autocorrelation between the independent variables of the study, hence the validity of the model. The results in Figure 2- Figure 6 suggests that the assumptions of normality, linearity, and Homoscedasticity were met. Multicollinearity was tested by examining the variable inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values for all variables. The presence of multicollinearity threatens the internal validity of multiple regression analysis and increases the likelihood of errors in hypothesis testing (Field, 2009). In order to conclude that multicollinearity is absent, the VIF values and the tolerance values are acceptable if they are below 10 and over 0.1 respectively (Hair *et al.*, 2006; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The results for testing multicollinearity in terms of VIF and tolerance values with sustainable competitive advantage as

the dependant variable are presented in Table 12 which revealed that individual level learning had VIF of 4.088 and tolerance of 0.245, group level learning had VIF of 3.361 and tolerance of 0.297, and organizational level learning had VIF of 4.176 and tolerance of 0.239, suggesting multicollinearity was absent among the variables (Hair, Black, Baln, & Anderson, 2010). Accordingly, the researcher proceeded to the next phase of testing to test the hypotheses H2, H3, and H4.

Table 10 presents the model summary of standard multiple regression results for the role of organizational learning (individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning) in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. From the model summary, it is clear that the value of R was 0.635, while the value of R² was 0.404, and the adjusted R² was 0.395, suggesting that a combination of three organizational learning variables (individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning) can predict and explain approximately 39.5% of the variation in the sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. Therefore, 60.5% of the variation in sustainable competitive advantage universities in Kenya cannot be explained by the organizational learning alone. Consequently, there might be other variables that have an influence also necessitating the need for future research to discover these variables that were not within the scope of the present research.

Table 10: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.635 ^a	.404	.395	.272	1.926
a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Level Learning, Group Level Learning, Individual Level Learning					
b. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Competitive Advantage					

The ANOVA tests whether the model is significantly better than the mean at predicting the outcome variable. Table 11 presents the results of the ANOVA of standard multiple regression results for the role of organizational learning (individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning) in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. From the ANOVA table, it is clear that the overall standard multiple regression model (the model involving constant, individual level learning,

group level learning, and organizational level learning) achieves a high degree of fit, as reflected by the value of R was 0.635, while the value of R² was 0.404, and the adjusted R² was 0.395, F (3, 211) = 47.636, p < 0.001). The results show that all the three organizational learning variables (individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning) were significant in predicting explaining sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

Table 11: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.553	3	3.518	47.636	.000 ^b
	Residual	15.582	211	.074		
	Total	26.135	214			
a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Competitive Advantage						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Level Learning, Group Level Learning, Individual Level Learning						

Table 12 presents the standard multiple coefficients for the role of organizational learning variables (individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning) in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. Following the recommendations by Pallant (2007), the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) were used to construct a regression equation, calculate the predicted values for each observation and to express the expected change in the criterion variable for each unit change in predictors. Therefore, when the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) were

substituted to the multiple regression model which was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

The multiple regression equation becomes:

$$Y = 2.136 + -0.202X_1 + 0.252X_2 + 0.393X_3$$

This multiple regression equation was:

$$SCA = 2.136 + -0.202ILL + 0.252GLL + 0.393OLL$$

The multiple regression equation has established that taking all factors into account (individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning) constant at zero, sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya will be 2.136 units. The established

multiple regression equation suggests that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in individual level learning can lead to 0.202 decrease in sustainable competitive advantage; a unit increase in group level learning can lead to 0.252 increase in sustainable competitive advantage; a unit increase in organizational level learning will lead to 0.393 increase in sustainable competitive advantage. The results suggest that organizational level learning contribute most to sustainable competitive advantage followed by group level learning, while individual level learning contributes negatively to the sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. Therefore, leaders and managers in universities in Kenya should focus on utilizing the organizational level learning, followed by group level learning as opportunities to counter the threat of individual level learning to sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya.

For H2 the regression results revealed that individual level learning had a negative and statistically significant role in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya ($\beta = -0.265$; $t = -2.468$; $p < 0.05$), consequently the Ho2 which proposed that there is no significant role of individual level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya was rejected while the H₁₂ which predicted that there is a significant role of individual level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya was accepted, and thus conclusion was made that there was a significant role of individual level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. For H3 the regression results indicated that group level learning had a positive and statistically significant role in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya ($\beta = 0.397$; $t =$

4.079; $p < 0.001$), consequently the Ho3 which proposed that there is no significant role of group level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya was rejected while the H₁₃ which proposed that there is a significant role of group level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya was accepted, and thus conclusion was made that there was a significant role of group level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. With regard to the H4 the regression results revealed that organizational level learning had a positive and statistically significant role in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya ($\beta = 0.498$; $t = 4.586$; $p < 0.001$), consequently the Ho4 which predicted that there is no significant role of organizational level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya was rejected while the H₁₄ which proposed that there is a significant role of organizational level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya was accepted, and thus conclusion was made that there was a significant role of organizational level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. Overall, the statistical analyses revealed that organizational learning plays a positive and statistically significant role in sustainable competitive advantage, confirming the results of the research by Oyeniya (2011) that found organizational learning was positively related to sustainable competitive advantage in Nigeria. More empirical findings have emphasized that organizational learning is a critical competence and a key element for gaining a sustainable competitive advantage (Dimovski & Škerlavaj, 2005; Jashapara, 2003; Kanya *et al.*, 2011; Miles & Darroch, 2006; Njuguna, 2009).

Table 12: Coefficients^a

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.136	.170		12.590	.000	1.802	2.471		
	Individual Level Learning	-.202	.082	-.265	-2.468	.014	-.363	-.041	.245	4.088
	Group Level Learning	.252	.062	.397	4.079	.000	.130	.373	.297	3.361
	Organizational Level Learning	.393	.086	.498	4.586	.000	.224	.562	.239	4.176

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Competitive Advantage

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

With increased competition in this era of globalization and knowledge economy, the role of organizational learning in building sustainable competitive advantage has become important for the survival and sustainable growth of universities in both developed and developing countries. However, most previous studies were conceptually grounded and empirically examined in advanced, developed and newly industrialized countries and from a large company perspective. The general purpose of this research was to assess the role of organizational learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. Specifically, the study examined the role of individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. Results revealed that organizational learning, individual level learning, group level learning, and organizational level learning play significant role in sustainable competitive advantage of universities in Kenya. The research discusses these findings and provides theoretical and managerial implications. We suggest that to develop a learning orientation the learning climate must be conducive and entrenched in internal structures, systems and processes. The research has significantly attempted to expand extant

literature in strategic management, organizational learning and sustainable competitive advantage by making several significant contributions.

6. Limitations and areas for further research

This research has some important limitations that need to be taken into consideration. The study used a cross-sectional survey design with only quantitative measures which can be improved upon by longitudinal studies with mixed quantitative and qualitative measures. For future research, more studies are required to examine the role of organizational learning along with other resources such as organizational culture, organizational innovation and knowledge management in sustainable competitive advantage.

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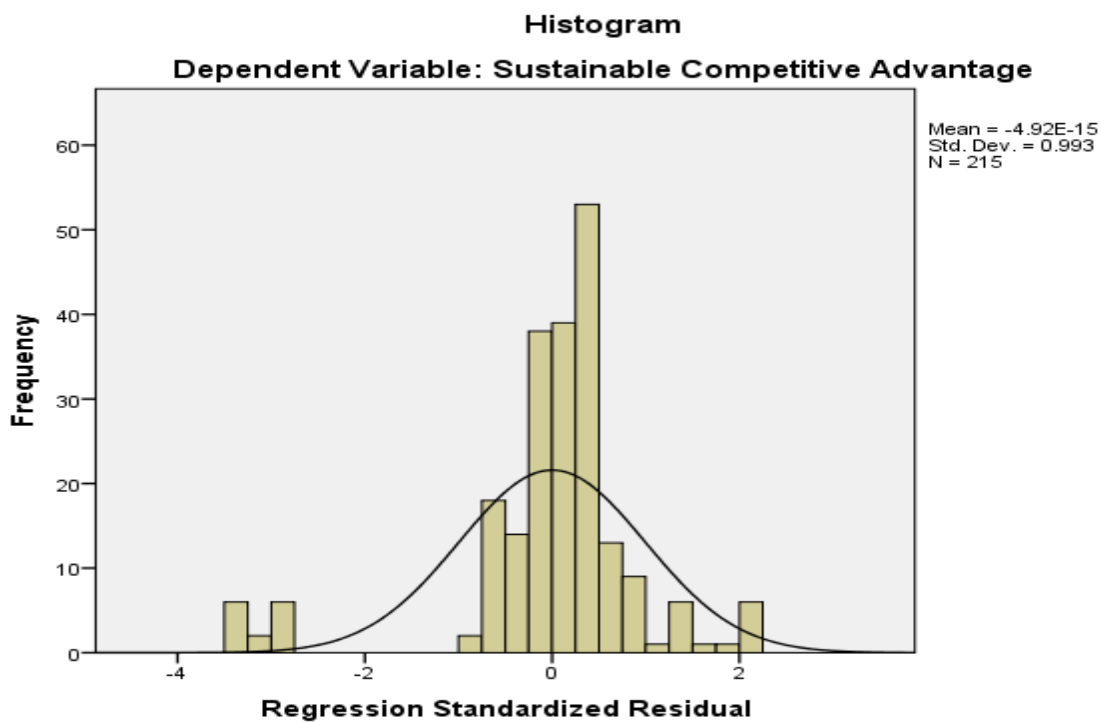


Figure 2: Histogram for the Standard Multiple Regressions between Organizational Learning and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

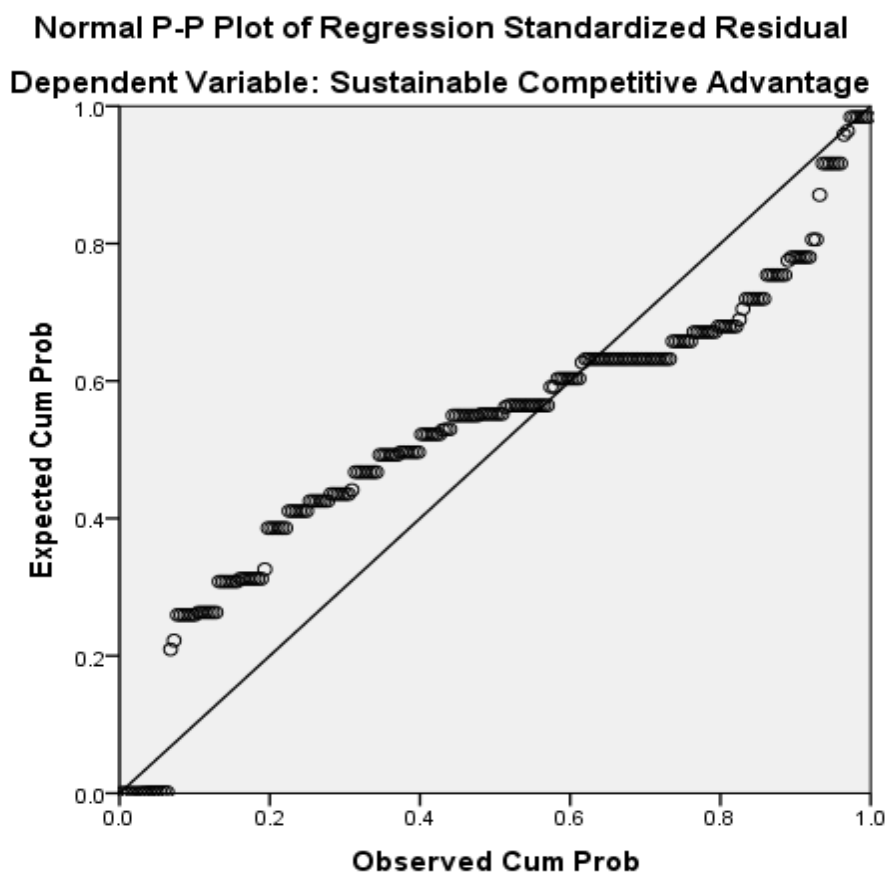


Figure 3: Normal P-P Plot for the Standard Multiple Regressions between Organizational Learning and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

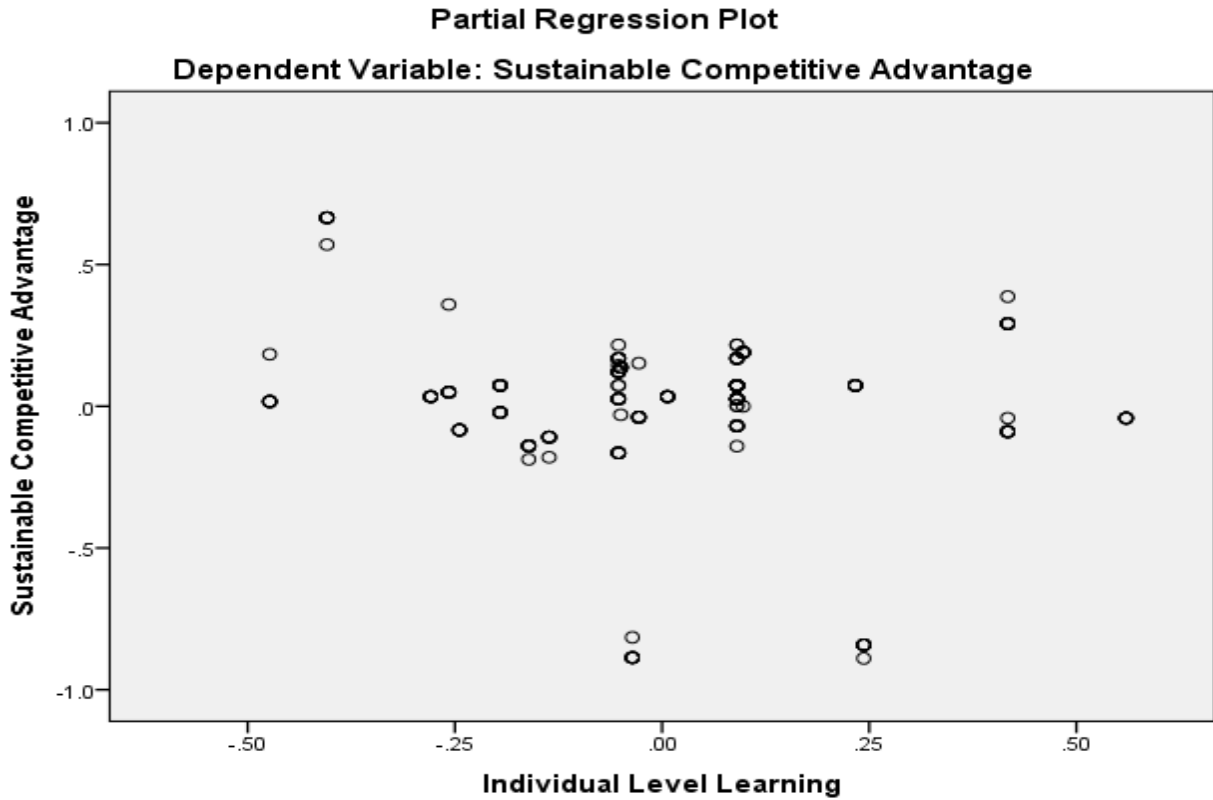


Figure 4: Partial Regression Plot for Individual Level Learning and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

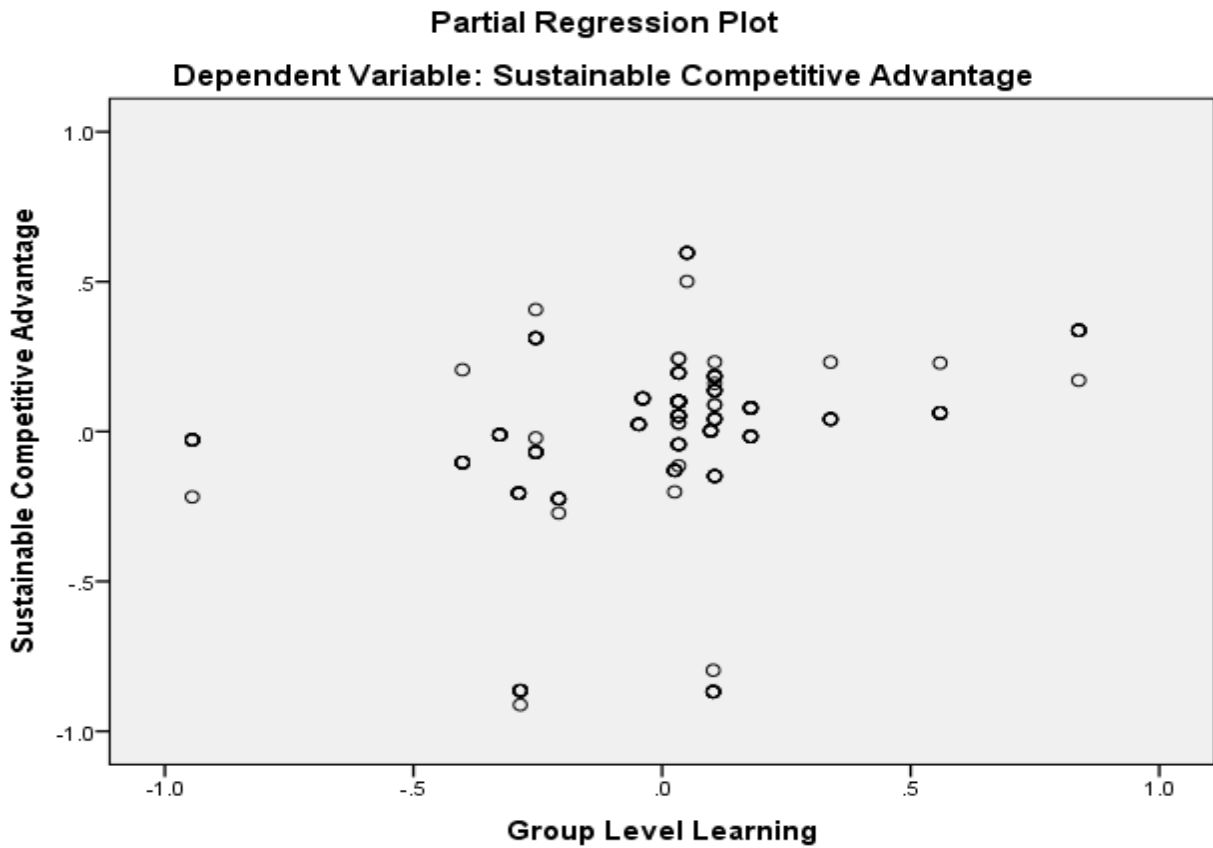


Figure 5: Partial Regression Plot for the Group Level Learning and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

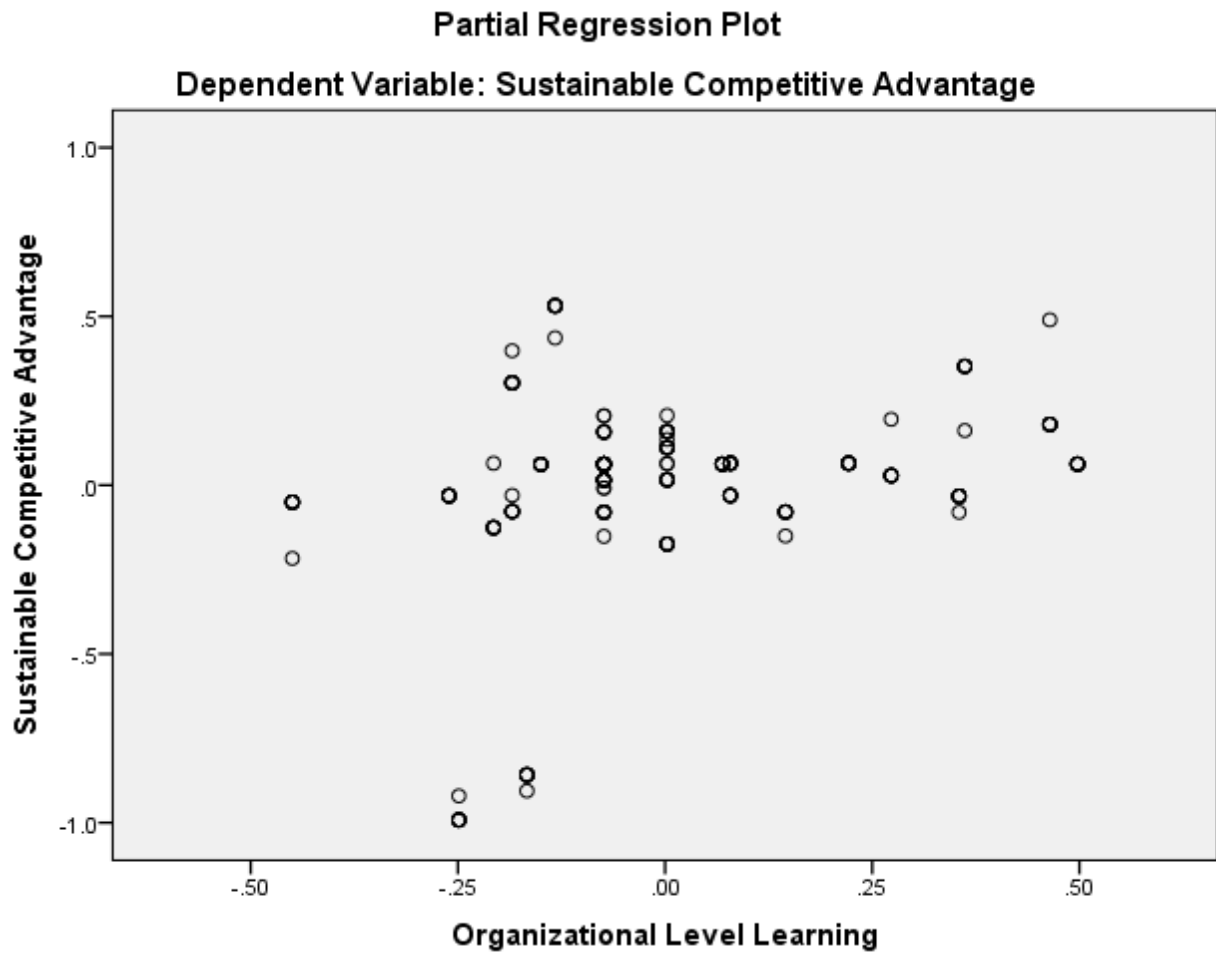


Figure 6: Partial Regression Plot for the Organizational Level Learning and Sustainable Competitive Advantage