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Influence of Employee Engagement Strategies on Service Delivery in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract

The study was on employee engagement strategies in service delivery with a focus on County of Nairobi by specifically evaluating the effect of work environment, leadership, training and reward strategies on service delivery. Descriptive research design was used in this study. The study population was 520 management level staff. The study utilized both stratified and simple random sampling in selecting a sample of 84 staff. Questionnaires were used in collecting data. Employee engagement strategies have statistically significant influence on service delivery in Nairobi City County as indicated by coefficient of determination of 79.3% and p value < 0.05. Motivated employees support organizations to perform well since they are more productive and willing to deliver services. The organizations should adopt transformative leadership to ensure employees are adequately trained, rewarded and remunerated to enhance service delivery.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Leadership, Training, Work Environment, Service Delivery

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Background of the Study

Scholars are immensely interested in the concept of engagement, which has seen it become popular in both the organizations and business literature for about twenty years ago (Wollard & Schuck, 2011). Engagement is well known as a foretelling tool of the final employee output, their accomplishments and financial performance of organizations (Robertson & Cooper, 2010). In contrast, research survey (For instance Robertson and Cooper, 2010; Gallup, 2013) revealed that there is minimum engagement in quite a number of countries. They proposed that at the moment roughly 15% of employees globally are engaged in their jobs. In the United States, the number of disengaged workers is roughly 50% while actively engaged employees are around 15%. A critical analysis of employee engagement in a Chinese context reveals that financial incentive, the support involvement during the crafting of decisions in organizational resources; supervisory support in social resources; job sovereignty and also the performance criticism in various tasks are important in influencing employees' job engagement and that more than 60% of Chinese

workers are disengaged in their work. Furthermore, the effect between the work assets and the desire to quit is mediated by engagement within Chinese firms (Chen, 2007). Employee engagement is identified as primarily vital in near future triumphant growth and operation of Chinese companies, in which case employee turnover is considered to be running at almost epidemic proportions (Shuck & Reio, 2011). A further focus on the state of employee commitment in the hotel service industry shows that employee engagement in Chinese firms is directly proportional to age, education qualification, job designation, duration served as well as remuneration. Employee engagement is considered an important forecaster of staff productivity in the Chinese hospitality industry (Zeng, 2009). Factors considered to positively contribute to employee engagement in Chinese firms consist of testing work atmosphere, positive reception, recognition and promotional opportunities (Wallace & Trianka, 2011).

Employee engagement is identified as the major contributor to harmony in the workplace. In the Nigeria Civil service, it has been discovered that there exists a higher similarity between employee engagement and the role played by each staff through the chains in the organizations (Robertson & Cooper, 2010). This is achieved by ensuring that employees are fully engaged in organizations decision-making and policy implementations. It is evident that engaged employees are revitalized and resilient in performing their daily tasks. Employees are fully devoted and put all their efforts and strength when performing their everyday jobs (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2012). A focus on Uganda's Domestic Tax department shows that employee engagement and teamwork contributed to the 32% variation of the employee team performance (Saks, 2014). A further study involving 184 employees from Uganda's public sector working in Gulu district revealed that employee engagement is greatly influenced by both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards (Adoko, 2015).

It is further noted that inter-personal relationship with peers, supervisors and clients is the key factor that plays a part in job engagement of nurses and midwives working in the health sector in Uganda. It is clearly indicated that positive relationship fosters job engagement whereas negative relationship acts as a barrier to job engagement among midwives in Uganda (Perryman, & Hayday, 2004). In Uganda, it is cited that lack of diversity (intrinsic rewards) and low salary (extrinsic reward) in organizations to be one of the five major factors that contribute to the existence of disheartened employees. Contrary, Robinson (2006) echoes that, employees who work under minimal pressure and freedom work extra hard and are more engaged and productive. In the Gambia, employee engagement is noted as a central factor influencing employee performance. It is further established that employee engagement aspects that are inclusive of compensation and salaries; working conditions; co-worker-team associations; leadership; firm structures as well as practices and regulations contribute to performance in service organizations (Robertson & Cooper, 2010). The concept of employee engagement has also been explored in Kenya. For instance, a study involving employees of 14 flower farms based in Naivasha concludes that employee engagement strategies determine the services delivered in horticultural firms (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014). However, no study has sufficiently addressed how employee engagement strategies influence service delivery in the public sector with a specific focus on Nairobi City County.

Statement of the Problem

The concept of engagement came to organizational limelight about twenty years ago. With the onset of devolved government in Kenya, counties are viewed as the entities that will enhance equitable distribution of resources and promote regional balance in development. However, over the past four years of its presence, significant realizations of the intended objectives of devolution have been rather elusive. In some instances, some quarters have referred to this system of governance as “devolved corruption” where only a few entities have seized the opportunity to enrich themselves. Nairobi County is the main center of focus on account of it serving as the Kenyan capital and the fact that it plays host to a number of diplomatic entities. The failure to achieve the intended objectives is as a result of several factors that include: inadequate financial allocation from the central government, corruption, poor management, poor remuneration, and poor planning among others.

Researchers have established that the engagement level of employees is directly proportional to the growth in revenue. Customer satisfaction and employee engagement have a relationship as supported by some researchers and scholars (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2002); Hewitt Associates, 2004; Chen, 2007; Coffman, 2000; Macey, Schneider, Barbera, and Young (2009); Heintzman & Marson, 2005). According to Anitha (2014), work environment and staff capacity influence service delivery at the Ministry of Immigration in Kenya. It is further noted that employee engagement strategies such as employee involvement, leadership, reward, communication and workplace well being contribute to the performance of service in organizations (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). While most studies enumerate the influence of employee engagement on the general organizational performance, there appear to be no empirical studies conducted on employee engagement strategies and service delivery in devolved government (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wemasing, & Peterson, 2008). Thus, the study sought to determine the effect of employee engagement strategies such as work environment, leadership, training and reward on service delivery in Nairobi City County.

Literature Review

Employee Engagement Strategies

The study focuses on the contribution of various features that control engagement identified by Anitha (2014) that include: reward, training, leadership and work environment strategies to service delivery or work performance. The term work environment is considered a crucial aspect, which controls the extent of engagement (Harter et al., 2002). In their view, Deci and Ryan, (2007), a good supportive policy created by employers show the concern of employee’s feelings and needs. Both the employer and employee ought to create a positive communication and feedback system in order to realize organizational goals and ultimate success in the organization (Miles, 2001). According to a study by (ASAID, 1999) employees cite effective exploitation of space and a workplace that enables them to work efficiently as the vital elements of the work environment. Managers say that not only privacy and flexible workspaces but also comfort and visual appeal enable them to work efficiently. Positive work environment will increase confidence and that feeling of owning the organization and by this engagement levels are boosted and increased service delivery and the overall performance (Robinson, 2006).

Work Environment Strategy

A study focusing mainly on the impact of engagement has on employee dedication and commitment in their work in an organization: this is a comparison in Ghana between the

private and public sectors (Snell, & Dyer, 2005). There is a revelation that a considerable positive link between employee engagement, extra effort and dedication of the staff in private organizations is better compared to their counterparts in the public sector. There is no considerable difference in the long and short-term employees in relation to commitment levels (Agyemang, 2013). Knudsen, Busck, and Lind (2011) studied the quality of work environment: the function of workplace involvement and democracy. The study explored how employee involvement affects the work environment quality and the well being of employees at 11 Danish places of work in 6 different industries. A study on both direct involvement and representative forms of participation at the workplace level was carried out. It is indicated that the work environment and high standards of participation produce the same result in both statistical and qualitative comparative analysis. It is deduced that workplaces that are managed with principles of democracy, employees have the highest levels of participation depicting strong elements of collective participation and have the best work environment; this being a measure of their well-being.

Leadership Strategy

A study examining individual and organizational aspects that have an impact on employee engagement among employees of Nigeria Distillers Limited in Ogun State reveals a positive and significant relationship between work locus control, consciousness level, leadership style and employee engagement (Oyewole, 2014). A further study on the relationship and influence of the variables of employee engagement on workplace harmony in the civil service of Nigeria indicate that career enhancement and leadership cooperation attract workforce loyalty and engagement in state civil service. However, the effects of such factors on service delivery have not been explored. Johan and Merwe (2013) study valuable service delivery based on a leadership challenge for police. The study depicts why proficient delivery of service given by the South African Police Service (SAPS) is not present in spite of a legislative and policy structure promoting enhanced service delivery. In addition, it depicts the role played by the SAPS management team to maximize service delivery. The study concentrates on SAPS management competencies to surpass skimpy policy on paper to provide better service to the society. An outline of performance management and leadership in public sector organizations illustrates that creativity and innovation in leadership to translate policies documented in paper into actions is essential for better service delivery to thrive.

Leadership draws enormous attention as a feature of engagement (Trinka & Wallace 2009, Gardener et al., 2008; Wildermuth & Pauken, 2008). This, in turn, has an impact on employee performance. In the preceding study, it is drawn that effective leadership has a positive influence on employee performance. Leadership is regarded as one of the factors that will affect employees in all heights of significance that in turn results in improving organizations overall performance. This is also evident in Schneider et al., (2009). The study concluded that authenticity, transformative and supportive leadership has a great role in cultivating and the involvement of employees and the inter-relation between the seniors and their juniors (Macey & Schneider, 2008). In Murphy and DeNisi (2008), transformational leadership comes into the limelight when the management creates and improves employees' levels of interest aiming at the creation of awareness and acceptance of the organization as a whole for the benefit of the entire team. In the study argument, transformational leadership encourages employees to be selfless and instead be in the interest of the benefits that are accrued by the organization.

Transformational leadership in the interest of the employee originality is improved by the organizational environment and subsidiary recognition with the leader (Bruce & Scott, 1994). Dependable leadership is associated with both positive organizational conduct and psychology, which greatly relies on developing strengths, virtues and consistency (Avolio et al., 2009). Dependability results into the creation of that sense of helplessness and fear in the workplace among employees (Cranton & Carusetta, 2008).

Training Strategy

A study by Mpofu and Hlatywayo (2014) from an identified municipality involved collection of data from 150 staff members. This was aimed at identifying the relationship that exists between the employing training quality and the services delivered to clients. The outcome indicated that it is very crucial to conduct effective employee training, have developed systems and processes. The results of the findings correspond to the fact that well-trained employees and development of programs are essential in the performance of the organization. This, as a result, leads to an improved service provision to customers. The findings from the study revealed that resourceful and effectual service delivery are achievable if employees are well trained. In-service training was considered to be a part of the strategy for improving the delivery of services in the public sector. This was a result of Public Service Reforms in Africa (Wachira, 2010). It is suggested that standard training and development in employees should be acceptable as a requirement for enhancing competence for improved organizational performance. A study by Nassazi (2013) in the telecommunication industry in Uganda focused on appraising the impact of training on employee performance. The result indicated that training had a huge influence on the performance of the employees.

Ukpere and Naris (2009); Laabs (2001); Pretorius and Schurink 2007); Nisha (2009); Zulkifli and Duasa (2009); Ramalibana (2009) evaluated the connection that exists in training and the provision of excellent services. The result of the study proves that quality service delivery can only be achieved through the employment of experienced facilitators in the subject matter. From this study, it can be deduced that improved organization performance can be improved through the deliverance of quality services emerging from standardized training and development. Training and the creation of opportunities in career development is a way of involving employees to attain and uphold an improved performance. Training accelerates delivery of service to customers, accurate standards and the efficiency in an organization environment. It also augments passion amongst employees and encourages them to put more effort. This, in turn, increases their competency resulting in improved business performance and productivity. Involvement of an organization in training and development is very crucial and obligatory in increasing employees' ability and effectiveness in performing their duties hence improved productivity. It is stated in psychological theories that guidance and coaching of the staff are very important as it affects intuitive resources that include skills and knowledge in order to advance performance (Murphy & DeNisi, 2008).

Reward Strategy

A study on the effect of Employee engagement aspects that include the incentives and acknowledgement on job performance with the focus mainly on Kenya's public sector was carried out in Nakuru Water and Sanitation Services Company Limited. It revealed that better performance is observed in better-engaged employees. In the study, employees require feedback and positive re-strengthening to maintain the engagement. Recognition,

on the other hand, is said to be vital when it comes to inspiration and engagement (Muchai, 2012). A similar study was carried out that shows how employee engagement and employee dedication at Barclays Bank of Kenya revealed that reward, adequate compensation by the company and gratitude would work towards the building of trust between the staff and management (Wachira, 2013).

According to Saks and Rotman (2006) recognizing employees and giving them incentives is a crucial step in engaging them. In the study, when employees are given incentives, they have a feeling of attachment and a great bond with the organization and this result in improved allegiance. The rewards system that is in the public sector includes: loan schemes, medical insurance, vehicle and compound loans. Holiday pay and bonuses absent in the present public sector, remuneration and compensation policies influence the level of engagement of the staff. Regrettably, the loan scheme is based on position merits and not on performance weight (Wallace & Trianka, 2009). In some isolated cases, the scheme may be given to poorly performing employees in the forecast of taking up the senior positions, which mostly do not correspond with performance. The reward systems are at times perilous and can at times eventually result in disengagement especially to industrious employees, which make them not worthy of such rewards. This affects the general performance of the organization (Soane, Truss, Alfes, Schantz, Rees & Gantenby, 2012).

Research Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive research design. The target population of this study was 520 staff comprising 8 senior Management level staff, 162 middle management Level Staff and 350 lower level management staff of the County Government of Nairobi. Using Yamane (1967) the sample size was 84.

Table 1: Sample Size

Category	Number	Sample= $N/520*84$
Top Management	08	01
Middle Level Management	162	26
Lower Level Management	350	57
Total	520	84

The study used questionnaires to collect primary data.

Results and Analysis

84 questionnaires were distributed to Nairobi city county staffs to include at least 84 staffs. The total questionnaires completed and returned were 78. This translates to a response rate of 91.3%.

Correlation Analysis of the Study Variables

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables

		Service delivery	Work environment	Leadership	Training	Rewards
Pearson Correlation	Service delivery in Nairobi City County	1.000	0.805	0.755	0.780	0.489
	Work environment	0.805	1.000	0.769	0.658	0.602
	Leadership	0.755	0.769	1.000	0.507	0.740
	Training	0.780	0.658	0.507	1.000	0.626
	Rewards	0.489	0.602	0.740	0.626	1.000

Variable relationship is based on Pearson correlation coefficient (r). This helped in illustrating the connection between all the variables under study. Correlation analysis indicates that all the variables are positively correlated with each other. The most positively correlated variables are between work environment and service delivery in Nairobi City County; and between training and service delivery in Nairobi City County with a correlation coefficient of 0.805 and 0.780 respectively. On the other hand, rewards and service delivery in Nairobi City County are the least correlated with a correlation of 0.489.

Coefficient of Determination (R Square) of Study Variables

Table 3: Coefficient of Determination on Service Delivery in Nairobi City County

Model Summary				
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
0.891	0.793	0.719	0.175	

Predictors: (Constant), Work environment, Leadership, Training and Rewards

Findings indicate that work environment; leadership, training and strategies collectively influence service delivery in Nairobi City County by 79.3% as indicated by the coefficient of determination (R square). This is also an indication that other factors (except Work environment, leadership, training and rewards) explain 20.7% of any change in service delivery in Nairobi City County. These findings are in line with those from a study examining the individual and organizational aspects that have an impact on employee engagement among employees of Nigeria Distillers Limited in Ogun State. They reveal a positive and significant relationship between work locus control, consciousness level, leadership style and employee engagement (Oyewole, 2014). A similar study was carried out that shows how employee engagement and dedication at Barclays Bank of Kenya reveal that reward; adequate remuneration by the employer and recognition would work towards the creation of trust among the staff and management.

Beta-Coefficients of Study Variables and the Regression Constant

Table 4: Coefficients of Variables Relationship

	Coefficients (a)		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients				
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-0.591	0.177		-3.34	.000
Work environment strategy	0.732	0.064	0.756	11.44	.000
Leadership strategy	0.450	0.380	0.560	1.18	.049
Training strategy	0.212	0.050	0.221	4.24	.017
Rewards strategy	0.313	0.047	0.308	6.66	.000

Dependent Variable: Service delivery in Nairobi City County

In determining the relationship between the dependent variable (service delivery in Nairobi City County) and the independent variables (Work environment, Leadership, Training and Rewards strategies) the standardized Beta coefficients generated from regression analysis guides the development of the model. All the coefficients and constant have p values < 0.05 thus significant. The model is therefore estimated as:

$$\text{Service delivery in Nairobi City County} = -0.591 + 0.756 \text{ Work environment} + 0.560 \text{ Leadership} + 0.221 \text{ Training} + 0.308 \text{ Rewards} + \varepsilon$$

Service delivery in Nairobi City County is expressed as a function of work environment, leadership, training and rewards strategies. From the regression coefficients, the study finds that an increase of a unit of Work environment strategy leads to an increase in service delivery in Nairobi City County by 0.756 while an increase of a unit of leadership strategy increases service delivery in Nairobi City County by 0.560. An increase in training strategy by one unit was found to positively affect service delivery by increasing it with 0.221 while an increase by one unit of rewards results to an increase in service delivery in Nairobi County by 0.308. The constant was -0.591 , which means that if, work environment, leadership, training and Rewards strategies are held constant (at zero); in other words, if they are absent, service delivery in the county is negatively affected (decreases) by 0.591 units.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	19.385	4	4.846	70.232	0.001
Residual	5.051	73	0.069		
Total	24.436	77			

Predictors: (Constant), Change in Work environment, Leadership, Training and Rewards
 Dependent Variable: Service delivery in Nairobi City County

The F value of 70.232 was significant since p value < 0.05 indicating that work environment, leadership, training and reward strategy significantly influence service delivery in Nairobi City County.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that employee engagement strategies have a statistically significant contribution to service delivery in Nairobi City County as indicated by the coefficient of determination of 79.3% and p-value < 0.05 . Despite their minimal participation in the planning and design of county projects, employees at Nairobi City County have largely contributed to service delivery. The study also reveals that motivated employees help organizations to perform well since they are more productive and willing to deliver services. Managers should understand what motivates employees within the context of the roles they perform for them to be successful. The most arguably complex function played by a manager is the engagement of employees in decision making. In addition, service delivery is achieved by providing employees with more freedom in decision making in areas like work methods, sequence and pace. The management of county governments should give workers a feeling of personal responsibility for their tasks as well as providing them with feedback on their service delivery. Many organizations lack a clearly formulated and well spelt out policies on employee engagement and participation in making various decisions. Putting in place rewards/monetary motivational policies is considered a cost burden while giving employee freedom in matters regarding decision-making is termed ultra-vires. Given the above scenario, staff are bound to feel that they are nothing more than "cogs in a wheel" and that the organization is only inclined to achieving its objectives.

This is bound to adversely affect their morale leading to the eventual collapse of the organization if not checked.

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