

FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE JOB PERFORMANCE IN COUNTY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTAL PROJECTS: A CASE OF MERU COUNTY GOVERNMENT, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Employee performance continues to be a major hurdle for county governments in Kenya. The purpose of the study was to determine the factors influencing employee job performance with a focus on the projects ran by county governments, with a focus on Meru County. The study was guided by the following objectives: To examine the influence of organization culture on employee job performance in Meru County; to determine the influence of adequate funding for county projects on employee job performance in Meru County; to assess how employee remuneration/compensation influences employee job performance in Meru County; to examine how training influences employee job performance in Meru County; and to investigate how work environment influences employee job performance in Meru County. The study was also guided by several theories. The target population for the survey will be 185 departmental technical staff of Meru County government. The study adopted a descriptive design and pick a sample size of 126. The instruments of data collection in the study was questionnaires. Data analysis will be done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 software. Quantitative data was analysed and presented through descriptive statistics; however, for qualitative data, detailed narrative was used to summarize data. The quantitative findings of the study was presented using tables. The study concludes that organizational culture influences the effectiveness of any employee and that the involvement of top management in any project venture positively the outcome of the

project. Further, the study concludes that teamwork is paramount for it allows an employee to take responsibility in decision making while allowing other members to take charge of the project outcomes. In addition, it is concluded that communication flow should be encouraged to ensure clarity of outcomes. In addition, the study concludes that time management is of essence in a project work to ensure adherence to timelines for timely project completion. The study also concludes that rewards for exemplary performance should be considered to motivate project staff. Concerning funding of projects, the study concludes that adequate funding should be factored during budgeting to ensure that project is completed as scheduled. Further, the study concludes that in many instances, funds for projects were released late jeopardizing the project outcome. It is also concluded that project funds are well managed and projects are at a high percentage completed on time by the contracted entity. On employee remuneration and compensation, the study concludes monthly salary as well as allowances motivates project staff to perform optimally in project work. Concerning training of project staff, the study concludes that most of the employees are not privy to the presence of a staff training guideline and as a result, the employees do not take advantage to so as to seek County sponsorship for professional courses. Nevertheless, the study concludes that training is essential for optimal job performance. As regards workplace environment, the study concludes that there is not enough space for working effective

working of the project staff, but there is enough office furnishing meaning that the staff are congested in their working places. On the employee performance, the study concludes that employees complete their projects on time while adhering to

professional conduct in execution of project work.

Key Words: *employee job performance, county government departmental projects, Meru County government, Kenya*

INTRODUCTION

In the recent time, employee performance has received much attention because it helps an organization achieve its competitive edge against its competition in the same industry. According to Haenisch (2012), productivity of employees plays a significant role on the financial position of a business. The key to achieving goals of the organization and staying competitive is employee performance. The critical component in any organization is the employee; and by improving the employee's performance at the workplace, organizations can successfully compete (Altrasi, 2014). Every employee has a unique collection of values and beliefs usually based on national and cultural norms (Al-Malallah and Regondola, 2014). These unique values and beliefs play an important role in their performance.

Employee Performance is the successful completion of tasks by a selected individual or individuals, as set and measured by a supervisor or organization, to pre-defined acceptable standards while efficiently and effectively utilizing available resource within a changing environment. Workers' performance is the job-related exercises expected of staff and how well those exercises are executed. This includes all angles that specifically or in indirect way influence and identify with the work of workers (Kuria and Nzuve, 2015). Therefore, understanding the factors that influence employee performance is vital because the organization will reinforce those factors to improve performance. As such, organizational psychologists have sought to establish the relationship between motivation and job performance for at least five decades.

Performance is one of the major and significant sources of economic growth and competitiveness there by making it a statistical reference point for comparisons and also a productivity assessment tool. Productivity in Pakistan is perceived as a threat to many organizations because many managers do not practice good performance management techniques. This can be sanctioned by implementing proper performance management techniques such as motivation to increase the psych of employees (Khan, 2006). Employee performance thus refers to undertaking a set of activities with the aim of getting results and thus, performance evaluation is at the heart of performance management.

Organizational culture can be said that it encourages employees to attain objectives of the organization as Darmawan (2013) affirmed that, organizational culture has some relation to the

accomplishments of a company. It can promote dedication to the firm's values and philosophies hence generate shared feelings of performing tasks towards common objectives. Organizational culture serves as a control tool to direct behaviours toward desired characters and away from unwanted characters through its norms (Schein, 2011).

PricewaterhouseCoopers (2014) identified important project success factors as 'clearly establishing project costs, committed funding, and a deliberate project centered financial management framework that includes cost monitoring and reporting. Steinfort and Walker (2007) in their study note that 'sufficient financial and non-financial resources being specifically dedicated for the project based on details obtained from a well thought out project plan' as a success factor.

The ultimate aim of training and development programs is to add value to leaders and employees (Mucheru, 2015). According to Obisi (2011), training and development of employees should be a continuous activity. Training helps employees to acquire skills needed to perform their work, which ultimately helps organizations to achieve their objectives. In project management, training should aim at developing new or improving existing skills and competencies of project managers and project team members (Lytras, De Pablos & Avison, 2010). Training and work-related workshop activities improve the capacities, knowhow and practical experience of project team members. As a result, the project team is equipped with skills and experiences that will enable them to perform their duties to achieve project objectives.

Employees will always be contended when they feel that their immediate environment states are in tandem with their obligations (Farh and Seo, 2012). Chandrasekar (2011) asserts that the type of workplace environment in which employees operate determines whether or not organizations will prosper. The workplace environment consists of physical factors which include the office layout and design among other factors; while the psychosocial factors include working conditions, role congruity and social support. Other aspects of the workplace environment are the policies which include employment conditions. A better physical workplace environment boosts employees' performance.

In the County Governments of Kenya, performance of employees is based on plans that are the recorded performance elements that set forth the expected employee performance and the performance must be up to what the organization has set. Organizations consider their employees as a critical asset towards the attainment of organizational goals. This is evident in the projects currently being implemented in Meru County. However, the same objectives can only be attained from a workforce that is satisfied and committed to the organization's goals and vision. This category of employees will be those that perceive to have their interest to be catered for by the firm standards. According to Samad (2007) if a workforce is satisfied with their job as well as the organizational environment including its relationship with colleagues, compensation and leadership, they will be more willing to put in extra effort to ensure that the organization realizes its objectives.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Kenya switched to the county government mode of governance in the year 2013. The country was subdivided into 47 regions that then inherited the staff of the former centralized government. The understanding was that the older staff had institutional knowledge and would help to get the incoming county governments get running faster as well as pass on the institutional knowledge to the new staffs that were to be hired by the individual counties. Hiring of new staff from the private sector was meant to boost the county governments with a corporate mindset of operation geared towards efficiency as they worked to provide services to the Kenyan citizens. The reality though is that this has not happened with many projects lying uncompleted and this study shall seek to find out why this is the case. County governments just like businesses operate in an unpredictable environment rife with competition for scarce resources like cash from the central government, human capital to serve as well as competition they face from private entrepreneurs who provide similar services to the citizens in their locale. Any business that fails to adopt and continue to improve their performance risks closure due to lack of customers. County governments face a risk of closure that happens if the citizen is not provided with adequate services through timely completion of county projects. They thus run the risk of being voted out in favor of a more competitive government that offers to resolve the problems of the citizens. Just like private businesses then, county governments ought to be in a perpetual state of change as they seek to provide world class services to their customers. They can achieve this by ensuring that their employees are providing stellar services. Performance of business and counties is directly related to its human resource which is the most important factor in determining whether an organization achieves its objectives or not. The success of County governments in Kenya is thus directly tied to the quality of the employees who man it. While County governments have an abundance of resources such as infrastructures or physical facilities, they are made redundant without the support of a qualified human resource. While there have been studies in the area of employee performance, there has been no research conducted specifically targeting the county governments and addressing its unique nuances in relation to the county projects and their effect on employee performance. Specifically, very few studies have been conducted on factors influencing employee performance in county government projects. For example, in their study, Nzuve & Njambi, (2015) examined performance based on the quality of output and commitment of the employees to the success of the organization but the study did not address the factors that influence employee performance. However, employee performance mirrors their ability to contribute through their works leading to the behavioral achievement that is in accordance with the goals of the company. It is against this background of inconsistency between the expected employee performance and the poor performance of the county governments that creates the need to find out why the disconnect exists despite the hiring of employees from the private sector and implementation of policies geared towards improving performance of the county employees, hence the significance of the study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to establish the factors influencing employee job performance in county government projects, a case of Meru County government Kenya.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the influence of organization culture on employee job performance in Meru County.
2. To determine the influence adequate funding of county projects has on employee job performance-in Meru County.
3. To assess how employee remuneration/compensation influences employee job performance in Meru County.
4. To examine how training influences employee job performance in Meru County.
5. To investigate how work environment influences employee job performance in Meru County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Job Performance

Human resources are vital for organizational excellence and they act as the main factor for achieving anticipated organizational objectives. Employee's performance depends on a number of factors. There are employees who perform better due to their levels of intrinsic motivation. Other employees perform well because the working conditions and the benefits are favorable. In most cases, it depends on the needs and priorities of employees and the status of employment that they are enjoying. These factors may affect their performance in their work places and this highly influences retention of employees in a particular job. Performance is attained when an employee achieves organizational goals in a highly effective and efficient manner. This goal is closely aligned with achieving the overall goals of the organization (London, 2009).

Employee performance is the successful completion of tasks by a selected individual or individuals, as set and measured by a supervisor or organization, to pre-defined acceptable standards while efficiently and effectively utilizing available resources within a changing environment (Haenisch, 2012). Employee performance thus refers to undertaking a set of activities while aiming for the results and performance evaluation that is at the heart of performance (London, 2009). This integrative perspective represents a configuration approach to strategic human resources management, which argues that patterns of HR activities, as opposed to single activities, are necessary to achieve organizational objectives (Torrington, Hall, Stephen, 2006). Organizations should understand that an organization cannot move forward without employee engagement (Mone & London, 2010). Employee engagement is one of the key

determinants fostering high levels of employee performance, as is constantly shown in a number of studies (Torrington, Hall, & Stephen, 2006).

Organization Culture and Employee Job Performance

An organization culture according to Elliot (2009) are the underlying beliefs, assumptions, values and means of interaction that make up a unique environment associated with a particular organization. It has a direct implication on the interactions between employees, customers and stakeholders. Organization cultures are meant to inspire cooperation and teamwork in the workplace from the top management levels to the bottom of the company. The organization culture also helps the team to identify with each other as they gang together to achieve shared values. These values and the organization culture also help the employees to identify with the organization founders' vision and comes in handy in the indoctrination of new employees into the organization.

Organization cultures have been broken down into four types according to research by business professors Quinn & Cameron (2011). First is the clan culture that espouses a very friendly working environment. There are a lot of people in this culture who share a lot of commonalities and the leaders of the organization are seen to be mentors and father figures. There is a lot of mentoring and employee participation with the organization glued together by tradition and loyalty. Second is an adhocracy culture that represents a working environment that is very dynamic and creative. Employees are encouraged to take risk and the leadership is seen to be innovators and risk takers. The organization culture values innovation and the company's overall plan is to grow and create new resources. The third culture is a market culture that represents result-oriented organizations. They put emphasis on finishing work and getting things done. The organization culture values achievement and competition. Finally, is the hierarchy culture that represents a formalized and structured work environment. Its values structure, control, efficiency and stability. There are formal rules to keep the organization running smoothly.

Employees need to find a way to fit into the organizations culture lest they feel like the sores in the group. It is therefore a matter of importance for the organization to spend time and resources to indoctrinate new employees into their organization. A well settled employee who deems themselves to be part of a group will experience better job satisfaction and thus lead to better productivity. Things that form part of an organizations culture include measuring performance of employees, communication habits, email etiquette, and dress code among others (Harackiewicz, 2003).

Managers at all levels in an organization then need to be concerned about ensuring that all members of their team are dialed in into the organizations culture. This includes helping the employees to identify individual interests that align with those of the organization to get the buy in of the employee who then feels that in achieving the organization's goals they are also achieving their own. This helps employees find meaning and dignity in their work which

consequently leads to increased productivity of the employees and better performance of the organization (Marten, 2012).

Funding of County Projects and Employee Job Performance

The success of both public and private project can be directly tied to its funding. The project funding has a bearing on the successful implementation of a project because it controls various factors that affect the project implementation. There are various factors associated with the funding of projects within any organization or country (Otieno, 2019). These include the politics of an Organisation, the priorities of leadership elected during the various election cycles, and the input from the citizenry where public participation is sought. The success of any project is largely determined by the resources available for its implementation. Resources refer to human capital, technical resources, material resources and financial resources necessary for the completion of a project. The availability of these resources in a timely manner has a bearing on the completion of projects.

The funding of projects is thus an important factor to consider before the implementation of any projects. In 2017, Murithi, Makokha, and Otieno conducted a research to assess the factors that affect timely completion of public construction projects in Trans-Nzoia County and the results showed that project resource allocation had a significant influence on timely completion of public construction projects. Financial issues and delays in payments of completed works led to further delays in project implementation. There were shortages of construction materials, delays in paying employee salaries and allowances, and payment of third-party service providers. All these resulted in delay in completion of projects, and affected the morale of the workers involved in the projects. The study by Murithi, Makokha, and Otieno (2007) recommended that county governments ensure there is sufficient allocation of resources for projects being run.

A study carried out in Mombasa on the determinants on successful project implantation within the county found that the funds provided by the county government to fund the project was not adequate to pay the county project employees' salaries and to fund the purchase of the materials necessary to implement the project. The county government had limited resources and relied on the central government for its funding as it could not generate enough funds from its collection of taxes at the county level. There was also little innovation at the county level in terms of seeking funding for their projects a situation that was replicated across the country. The overall effect of this was a limitation on the ability if the county governments to successfully implement their projects to completion which in turn severely affected the ability of the county governments to deliver services to the citizens.

A study in Nairobi county by Wambui, Ombui, and Kagiri (2015) to investigate the factors affecting implementation of road projects found that availability of funds, their usage and accessibility influenced the completion of the roads under study. They recommended that there

should be effective resource mobilization and a review on their assessment and management to improve the chances of successful project implementation in the county.

Public projects can be funded from various sources. The most common source of funds is the government treasury using funds derived from taxation of the country's citizens. These are then spread out across the country to fund various projects as per proposed budgets and needs of the citizens. While it is the most common, there are several challenges associated with this. First is the lack of adequate oversight in the implementation of the project funds and resources which leads to loss and misuse of vital project funds. Government have limited funds with which to address many needs and thus over time, project funding experiences cuts depending on the pressing issues of the day for the government.

The second source of funding for public projects is tolls and revenue booths. These are particularly effective in the funding of public roads and other transport related projects (Odeck, 2017). These tolls are set up along major roads and the various road users are charged a levy for using the road. These funds are then directed towards the maintenance of the roads and towards implementation of other projects. The major downside associated with this mode of funding is the long duration required to collect funds to implement any major project.

Donors and International organizations like the United Nation (UN), the world Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and AMREF among others also invest in various projects across the world. These are advised by various studies on the feasibility of the projects and the benefits to be accrued by the citizens of the locale where the projects are being implemented. In some instances, however, the organizations provide funding for the projects in exchange of payment at a later date while in other occasions, the funding is free. These projects have a higher completion rate due to the monitoring put in place by the organizations to ensure completion of the projects on time and due to availability of funding.

Governments also partner with private corporations to implement various projects. These projects can take different forms (Ghebregiorgis, 2018). First, the private firms can offer free funding for some projects as a form of corporate social responsibility on their part. This is common in corporations involved in mining where they invest in infrastructure that enables them to mine the ores productively while they also provide adequate housing and amenities for their staff. the companies can also invest in some projects purely to give back to the community they operate in. then there are instances where there are public private partnerships where the government partners with the private sector to implement a particular project for a consideration of money. Some of these partnerships take the form of the private companies investing and implementing a project to completion and then receiving payments over a period of time. In some cases, the private company also runs the projects for a period of time to recover their costs before handing over the project to the government. These partnerships while very rife with political interference lead to successful implementation of projects within the accepted timelines.

The provision of adequate funding for projects thus can be seen as a major factor that affects the level of employee performance. From the payment of employee dues to motivation derived from successful completion of projects, it is vital that county government projects are adequately funded to ensure high performance of employee.

Remuneration and Employee Job Performance

Employee remuneration is defined as all forms of compensation or pay given to employees because of their employment (Dessler, 2008). It includes financial and non-financial rewards. It is a combination of items like bonus payments, paid leave, actual pay, club subscriptions, allowances, education grants, and recognition, etc. Research has shown that employee recognition and rewards play a major role in improvement levels of employee engagement (Saks and Rotman, 2006). Their study identified that if an organization rewards their employees, they then feel indebted to counter with an increase in their levels of engagement and performance. An employee's level of engagement is directly related to the perceived benefits they receive from the organization (Kahn, 1990). Thus, one's level of engagement is not tied to the quantity or type of reward but instead on the employee's perception.

For any organization bent on improving their employee's performance, it is vital that the human resources department engages the employees fully to find ways and means of increasing their engagement and thus their performance. One way to do this is through introduction of a reward policy to addresses the reward of their employee. Rewards for employee fall into extrinsic reward category and intrinsic reward category (Shanks, 2014). He explains that extrinsic rewards refer to any external thing that the management provides as incentive to the employees geared towards increasing their productivity. Extrinsic rewards can be bonuses, promotions, flexible working hours, money, profit-sharing programs, and increments of pay, benefits and incentives among others. Extrinsic rewards can categorize into Choice, competence, meaningful work, progress, and healthy relationships at work (Manion, 2015). Shanks (2014) describe intrinsic rewards as being internal and intangible but subjective as they represent the feelings of the employee about his work and the value he adds to the company. Other researchers (Malhotra et al, 2011) argue that intrinsic rewards are derived from performing the job itself. Ritter and Anker, (2009) argue that intrinsic reward of for employees include things like employee participation in decision making, autonomy at work, skills garnered at work among others.

Rewards are used to motivate employees and encourage particular behaviors that are viewed as vital to enhance the employee performance while at the same time restraining behaviors which are seen as detrimental to an organization's growth and performance. This is best achieved under what Vroom terms as expectancy models (Kamoche & Mueller, 2008). Martin (2005) argues that the 'the basis of expectancy models is that motivation is a function of the desirability of the outcome of behavior. Thus, individuals are motivated to produce expected behavior if they are certain that there shall be reward for behaving in a particular manner (Ritter & Anker, 2009).

Organizations must be cognizant of the fact that monetary rewards offer one of the strongest motivators to induce employees to change their behaviors. However, some employees note that it doesn't rate very high as a motivator to work for a particular organization. They must also recognize that employees are unique beings as they go about designing a reward scheme to ensure that it is inclusive (Kovach, 2007). If well implemented, the reward scheme would then play a major role in building and maintaining employee engagement which consequently ensures workforce stability and consistent high performance of an organization. Research by Tsai K et al (2005) also demonstrated that employee reward schemes improve organizations productivity through improved labor efficiency as a result of reduced strikes and slowdowns. Employee satisfaction is also increased which is a reflection of good relationship between management and employees. Ismail et al., (2010) note that performance-based pay acts as a precursor to job satisfaction. When employees perceive that they receive adequate pay from their employer and that they are actively involved in the pay systems this leads to greater job satisfaction.

Studies carried out by Lazear, (2000) indicated that in some instances, firms recorded an increase in productivity of their employees by shifting from monthly pay to increased daily wages. This is only applicable though in manual jobs and it becomes necessary to hire more capable employees on monthly salary rates (Bandiera et al, 2009). This helps maintain an efficient work force. Research by Fernie and Metcalf, (1999) show that staff on a monthly salary has no incentive to work hard while those on a daily rate are motivated to perform harder by the probability of job loss as a penalty for low work output.

Organizations will implement compensation and remuneration strategies that work for them and will make the overall choice of the final rewards and pay policies. While as Larkin (2011) points out that compensation and remuneration for a company is a strategic issue, the organization must be guided by the sole concern of improving the performance of the employees. Their choice of reward can also include making technology upgrades in the company; provision of better working environment and tools of trade; improved marketing activities; investing in corporate social programs suggested by their employees among others. Coming up with a comprehensive reward scheme and effectively implementing it will result in desirable worker behavior

Training and Employee Job Performance

A report ran by McKinsey in 2006 showed that improving capabilities, skills and knowledge of a talented workforce was a major competitive advantage in a competitive market. For a company to develop the desired knowledge, skills and abilities among its employees, so as to improve their performance, there is need for implementation of training programs (Meyer & Smith, 2012). Effective implementation of this may positively affect employee motivation and their commitment towards the Organization. The training offered is geared towards optimizing the employee's potential and to prepare the employee to perform their work at the expected standard. Firms with good policies in place can invest in the development of new skills for their workforce

giving them an edge over their competitors in the market place. Investment in the employee training reflects the organizations interest in the development of employees and as a side effect leads higher motivation and commitment among the employees. The employees then give their all towards achieving the organizations goals.

Training is an activity that is planned, systematic and that result in an enhanced level of skill, knowledge and competencies necessary to perform a job effectively (Gordon, 1992). The goal of training programs is to bridge skill gaps that exist among the organizations workforce to enable the company achieve the optimum performance. Training can be given through different methods including coaching and mentoring, on the job training and through instructions (Tai, 2012). Training is geared to enable the organization effectively utilize its work force and thus improve its competitiveness in the market place. Thus, according to Kamoche and Mueller, (2008), it follows that an organization bent on recording the best performance possible has to invest in the training of its employees.

Effective training improves the performance of the employees through developing their innate capabilities, honing their creativity and their thinking abilities. This improves their ability to deal with customers in an effective and timely manner (Huselid, 2009). The employees develop a level of self-efficacy and superior work ethic through targeted training to address existing gaps in the business skill sets (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2011). Training also takes the form of personal training based on individual job requirements to keep the employees relevant lest they are forced out due to reduced productivity (Hung, 2010).

Training also helps keep the workers satisfied at their jobs for they are confident of their ability to perform their job at the highest possible expertise. According to Pfeffer (1994), training helps improve job performance as improved performance by the employees leads to satisfaction of management who may express their feedback in various ways. From training, there is a recorded increase in efficiency of company processes, ability to adopt new technology, improved job satisfaction, financial gain, reduced employee turnover and increased innovation and happier customers (Kaliannana and Adjovub, 2014).

Training methods can be categorized into on the job training and off the job methods (Decouza and Robbins, 1996). On the job training includes instruction at the place of work with the trainee receiving instruction from a fellow employee who is versed in the particular job while normal work continues. This is very common with new employees in organizations. Off job training on the other hand happens at a location outside one's normal workplace and is composed of lecturers, case studies, presentations, role playing, and simulations among others (Decouza & Robbins, 1996). It includes orientation training for new employees; apprentice training for technical training; vestibule training for training semi-skilled employees; and lectures for instructing large audiences especially in colleges.

Guest (2007) in his study mentions that training and development of employees comprises one of the major roles of human resource practitioners as it positively impacts their performance and the productivity of an organization. A study by Farouq and Khan (2011) also provided for a positive correlation between training and employee performance. It follows therefore that for an organization to improve its performance, it must provide for the training of its employees.

Work Environment and Employee Job Performance

Working conditions of employees refers to the working environment and all existing circumstance that affect the labor force in the work place. These may include: working hours; physical location, buildings and fixtures; employee legal rights; work load and an organizations culture. It is the immediate surrounding that human beings utilize to support his existence and if not manipulated appropriately would lead to introduction of hazards that would effectively inhibit the productivity of workers. Chapins (1995) describes a workplace as the environment where an employee performs his assigned duties as per requirements of his employer. An effective workplace thus is one that encourages the achievement of optimum results as per the expectation of the management (Shikdar, 2002). The physical work environment has a bearing on how employees of an organization relate with each other and they have a direct impact on interpersonal relations in the workplace. A workplace is a vital role to play in ensuring satisfaction of employees and thus impacting positively on their work productivity. There workforce of today is very diverse and equally the workplace is very dynamic. It is much easier to get jobs and workers are not averse to switching jobs every so often as they have very little loyalty to their employer. According to Smith, (2011), these factors together create an environment where the organization needs the employees to succeed and exist more than the employee needs the organization,

Research has been conducted into workplace features that employees' value highly as far as their workplace comfort is concerned and that consequently contribute to enhanced productivity and satisfaction at their workplace. These include office lighting, adequate lighting of offices, access to natural lighting and an acoustic environment (Geerts, 2004). Some features like ergonomic furniture and good lighting also have a positive influence on employee's health according to Dilani (2004) and thus a direct impact in employee productivity. Both of these affect an employee's physiological and psychological health thus affecting their performance at work. According to Larsen, Adams, Deal, Kweon & Tyler, (1998), an employee attitude at the work place is also affected positively or negatively by the ambient features of the office. These include movement of air, natural lighting and available windows among others. These also affect an employee's behavior, performance, productivity and job satisfaction levels.

The setup of an office also has a bearing on the workplace comfort ability with some employees preferring to work in offices with open floor plans while others prefer to work in cubicles that affords them some privacy. Some of the factors considered in this including individual privacy,

noise levels and other distractions and disturbances (Evans & Johnson, 2000). Companies should provide office space furnished with adequate rest rooms, toilets, first aid facilities. They should also provide employees with safety clothing according to their job requirements and drinking water in the offices. They should also ensure that all staff members are up to date on workplace safety measures and be safety conscious.

Glass and Saggi, (2002) mention that is important for organizations that provide services based on the skills of their employees to provide good working conditions in a bid to reduce employee turnover, reduce risk in the workplace and increase the productivity of their staff. According to Bornstein (2007), organizations that expose their employees to bad working environments suffer from diminished productivity while the opposite is true for organizations that invest in ensuring the workplace is conducive for their workers.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Goal Setting Theory

Goal setting theory emanated with Locke in the 1960's in which he tried to establish the positive relationship between clearly identified goals and performance and how goals could influence individuals' behavior. The theory is based on the argument that human actions are governed by goals and ambitions. This theory can be adopted by organizations that seek to capitalize on enhanced performance, growth and productivity. In this case goals can be used to motivate individual to focus on the object which in our case is employee performance in County Government projects. Managers should keep on monitoring the performance of employees to ensure their effectiveness on goal attainment. Feedback in performance management is provided in the theory of goal setting in order to enable employees to review project performance and increase effort geared towards achievement of project goals. As a result of met goals the theory provides for reward that should be pegged on achievements of goals. However, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) posit that goal-setting theory has various limitations such as; conflict in cases where the project goal is not in line with the goals of the organization as a whole. Secondly, in complex project tasks, goal setting may impair growth in that individuals may focus on meeting the goals rather than performing the tasks.

Theory of Organizational Excellence

The theory was proposed by Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman (2006) who posit it that organizational culture is closely tied to the success of best-run companies which are characterized by these attributes: a bias toward action; close to the customer; autonomy and entrepreneurship; productivity through people; hands-on, value-driven effort; This theory is important in this study since, due to the decentralized organizational culture of the County Government processes these identified are well covered and are majorly highly responsible for

the giant strides that the County has made in ensuring timely project delivery, cost effectiveness and prioritization of projects to benefit the residents. The Theory is linked to the study since the County is biased toward action since its technical staff are always seeking and developing new strategies for identifying and implementing county projects. In addition, the County encourages autonomy and entrepreneurship by encouraging innovations and risk taking among its technical staff by rewarding new techniques. Further, the County believes in the employees as a way of ensuring productivity through shared decision making, absence of rigidity of command and encouragement for new ideas. The County therefore manifest great levels of trust in subordinates, use participatory decision making, listen to and use employees' ideas/show concern for their welfare is practicing. The County also encourages hands-on, value driven effort by the employees by paying great attention in promoting and clarifying core County values to its employees. The culture of the county emphasizes high achievement levels by the staff.

Affective Events Theory

The Affective Events Theory, first advanced by Howard M. Weiss and Russel Cropanzano (as quoted in Thompson and Phua, 2012), explains the link between employees' internal influences and their reactions to incidents that occur in their workplace environment that affect their performance, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. It proposes that positive-inducing as well as negative emotional incidents at work have significant psychological impact on employees' job satisfaction. The impact results into lasting reactions exhibited through job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance. In a study by Ashton-James and Ashkanasy (2005) it was found out that workplace events trigger affective responses in employees which influence workplace cognition and behavior. The study asserted that affective events theory is both empirically and theoretically, restricted to events that are internal to the organization. According to Briner (2000), the theory considers how specific events at work other than job characteristics lead to specific emotional and behavioral responses. The study postulates that these events or things that actually happen at work affect the well-being of employees thus affecting their performance.

Resource Based View Theory

The theory is concerned with the idea that a firm's internal resources can become a direct source of sustained competitive advantage for the firm. According to Yang and Conrad (2011) Resource Based Theory is concerned with organizational performance heterogeneity. The objective is to bring together a range of internal resources which when combined and deployed strategically can create competitive advantage for the organization. The study explain that it is these resources that become valuable when they are used to enable the organization to implement its business strategy. According to Lacity and Willcocks (2008) the resource based theory deliberate on the resources that are possessed by a firm are the primary determinants of its performance, and may contribute to a sustainable competitive advantage of the firm. Productive

activity requires the cooperation and coordination of teams of resources. Mweru & Muya (2016) explains that the firm capability is the capacity for a team of resources to perform some task or activity and conclude that the firm's resources are the source of a firm's capabilities. Barney and Hesterly (2010) advanced that resources in general include the following key constructs: resources, capabilities and competences. Resource Based View theory in this study played a role of evaluating and explaining resources especially adequate project funding and capability of the County Government of Meru to create and maintain adequate finances for project implementation thus performing highly in project implementation which encouraged employees to perform better.

Human Capital Theory

According to Torrington (2008), human capital means the combined intelligence and experience of staff. People are becoming valuable assets and can be recognized within a framework of human capital. Thus, this is the reason why organizations invest a lot on their employees through training and development programs and appropriate reward systems. The theory has, therefore, cross cutting significance in Human Resource Management (HRM) practices such as recruitment and selection, training and development, human resource planning among others that are meant to help organizations achieve their goals (Ombui, 2014). As such, Rastogi (2009) states that human productivity should thus be improved through effective HRM practices, among them training and development of staff. The Human Capital Theory played a role in this study by advocating continuous staff training for optimal employee performance and adherence to the stipulated staff training guidelines

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A research design is a plan that is applied when conducting a project and it provides all the required information regarding the objectives of the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999) A design gives a firm foundation for the whole research product to be conducted and the development of accurate results, which meets the aims of the research (Mills, Albert, Gabrielle and Wiebe 2018). This study used descriptive research design. The descriptive survey design was suitable for this study since it allowed the researcher to study the phenomena which do not allow for manipulation of variables. This design enabled the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

Target Population

In a research, target population is a sample used to explain the characteristics of the entire population and it aids the researcher to generate research findings, recommendations and

conclusion that address the purpose and objectives of the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2009). The target population in this case was be 185 departmental technical staff as recorded by the Human resource department of Meru county government who are spread out across twelve departments. These were considered since they are directly involved in project execution. This number was deemed sufficient to allow generalization on the determinants of employee performance in county projects within the County government of Meru.

Sample size and Sampling Procedure.

Sample size refers to a representative section of the entire population according to Kothari (2004). Punch (2009) describes a sample as a smaller group that is studied and is drawn from a larger population, from which data is collected and analysed and inferences are then made on the population. According to Wiersma (2005), the ideal sample size should be large enough to achieve validity and reliability of data. Cohen (2007) on the other hand subscribes to the thought that there exists precise sample size. Instead, the sample size should be dependent on the purpose of the study and the nature of the population. As a rule of thumb though, the larger the population size, the more reliable the data presented is. The study shall adopt the Yamane formula (1967) to estimate an ideal sample size (n) from a known population size (N).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n= the required sample size; N = the target population; e = the level of significance (5%)

Substituting for the values in the formula as below

$$n = \frac{185}{1 + 185(0.05)^2}$$

$$n \sim 126$$

In a research, sampling procedure involves selection of respondents from the whole population to determine the characteristics of the participants. In research development, sampling is used to make the data collected more accurate and economical (Panacek & Thompson, 2007). The study adopted a probabilistic sampling technique where the research shall employ the stratified random technique to select respondents from a strata. After the respondents were stratified into groups, the research used simple sampling to pick respondents.

Data Collection Instruments

As a descriptive research, this study used questionnaires to collect data. According to Alshenqeeti (2014), the purpose of a questionnaire is to ensure collected information presents the thoughts and feelings of the respondents in the research. The primary purpose of using questionnaires in this study is to ensure that the questions asked are the same to all the participants to reduce interview effect and other related inconsistencies.

Data Collection Procedures

A research permit was obtained from the University of Nairobi, from the National Council of Science and Technology and from the head of department to carry out the research after which then data can be collected once the permission is granted.

Data Analysis Techniques

In research, data analysis ensures that the study provides meaningful and critical decisions based on the information gathered from the respondents. According to (Sutton & Austin, 2015) data analysis should present the accurate and fair view of the participants. Data analysis involves the cleaning, coding, and aggregation of the data to ensure it is ready for analysis using various tools. In the case of this research, the researcher used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Quantitative data for each question was tabulated to provide an all-inclusive picture of the general outlook of the data that helped the researcher in identifying patterns. In quantitative analysis, data was analysed using descriptive statistics to get statistical measures with the aim of helping the researcher make valid inferences about the topic under study.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Organization Culture

The study established that ICT organizational structure determines effectiveness of project work with 48.8% % of all the respondents in support. In addition, 43% of the respondents strongly agreed that top management was involved in project work while 68.6% of the respondents agreed that there was team work in the implementation of projects. Further, 43% of the respondents who strongly agreed that there was effective communication flow. The study also found out that the majority at 42.1% of the respondents agreed that the staff were aware of their duties and responsibilities in the project work, with 33.1% of the respondents strongly agreeing that they received prompt feedback after performing project task. Moreover, 44.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that time was well managed in project work in order to adhere to the project deadline, while 30.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that the management rewarded exemplary performance of employees in project implementation. The study also established that 43% were neutral on commenting on cordial relationship between management and employees. This notwithstanding 18.2% of the respondents agreed that there was cordial relationship between management and employees. Study findings also revealed that 37.2% strongly disagreed that project conflicts were effectively handled with a partly 19% agreeing to effective management of projects conflicts. Furthermore, 38.8% of the respondents were not free to be creative and innovative since most of the government projects came with designed that needed authority to change. 44.6% recommended hard work from the Senior managers, 29.8% indicated

that political affiliations should be laid aside in project work while, 25.6% of the respondents said that there should be a monetary reward system for excellent performance in project work.

Adequate Funding

The researcher established that there was adequate funding for the selected County projects as indicated by 41.3% of the respondents. This is because for government to undertake projects, budgeting should be done and approved. Further, the research findings revealed that project funds were delayed in release as indicated by 44.6% of the respondents with 35.5% of the respondents strongly agreeing that adequately funded projects were a motivation to the employees to perform well. 48.8% of the respondents agreed that project funds were managed effectively and 46.3% of the respondents agreed that most projects were completed according to budget. 34.7% of the respondents recommended timely release of projects funds. 53.7% of the respondents recommended that checking of inflation of projects cost after implementation while, 11.6% of the respondents recommended prompt payment of the contractors and suppliers.

Employee Remuneration/Compensation

The study established that 52.1% of the respondents agreed that monthly salary was a motivation for optimal performance of employees in project with 42.1% of the respondents indicating that allowances were found to be a great motivation for employee optimal performance in project work. In addition, 44.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that work benefits were a stimulant to employee performance of project work, but 52.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed that monetary benefits were received on time. 52.1% of the respondents recommended increase of salaries for project staff, 24% respectively recommended payment of all pending allowances and devising of mechanisms to avert delays in salary payment.

Training

From the study 37.2% of the respondents disagreed to being aware of the employer's staff training guidelines, while 42.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed about being sponsored by the employer to undertake pertinent training. Employer was found not to adhere to the stipulated training guidelines as indicated by a total of 38.8% of the respondents. Further, 24% of the respondents strongly did not sponsor themselves for training but training was found to influence optimal job performance with a total of 74.4% of the respondents agreeing with the statement. Moreover, 64.5% recommended that there be an emphasize on monitoring and evaluation of projects, 22.3% insisted on training of all project staff in project management while 13.2% recommended regular training of project staff.

Workplace Environment

The research established that 43% of the respondents strongly disagreed that there was spacious working space with 14.9% agreeing availability of spacious working space. Further, 48.8% strongly agreed to adequacy of office furnishing while 41.3% of the respondents agreed that there was adequate office ventilation. Moreover, 56.2% of the respondents that there was regular cleaning of the office with 83.5% of the respondents revealing that there was adequate work equipment.

Employee Performance of County projects

The study established that projects were completed within the stipulated deadline. This was represented by 60.3% of the respondents. Moreover, 44.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that project staff adhered to professional conduct while executing project works while, 46.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that employees adhered to professional project management standard. 59.5% of the respondents agreed that project staff exhibited teamwork in project work, while 59.5% of the respondents agreed that customers were satisfied with project work.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that organizational culture influences the effectiveness of any employee and that the involvement of top management in any project venture positively the outcome of the project. Further, the study concludes that teamwork is paramount for it allows an employee to take responsibility in decision making while allowing other members to take charge of the project outcomes. In addition, it is concluded that communication flow should be encouraged to ensure clarity of outcomes from the start of the project to the end while ensuring that each detail is well grasped to reap the benefits of teamwork in attainment of projects objectives. Moreover, feedback from project was found to be necessary to ensure that for it ensures cohesiveness in a team and brings out a healthy communication flow, while ensuring that deviations from projects are rectified on time. In addition, the study concludes that time management is of essence in a project work to ensure adherence to timelines for timely project completion. The study also concludes that rewards for exemplary performance should be considered to motivate project staff. In addition, it is concluded that conflicts should be addressed in time to avoid escalation which may affect project execution.

Concerning funding of projects, the study concludes that adequate funding should be factored during budgeting to ensure that project is completed as scheduled. Further, the study concludes that in many instances, funds for projects were released late jeopardizing the project outcome. It is also concluded that adequately funded projects in which funds are released on time is a motivation to the project staff. It is also concluded that project funds are well managed and projects are at a high percentage completed on time by the contracted entity. On employee

remuneration and compensation, the study concludes monthly salary as well as allowances motivates project staff to perform optimally in project work. It is also concluded that staff allowances and benefits are most of the time delayed in payment decreasing the morale of the project staff. Further, the study concludes that there are pending allowances that have not been paid in a long time.

Concerning training of project staff, the study concludes that most of the employees are not privy to the presence of a staff training guideline and as a result, the employees do not take advantage so as to seek County sponsorship for professional courses. As a result, many of the employees are yet to be sponsored by the employer to get additional training. Also, the study found out that training guideline is not strictly adhered to by the employer. Nevertheless, the study concludes that training is essential for optimal job performance. As regards workplace environment, the study concludes that there is not enough space for effective working of the project staff, but there is enough office furnishing meaning that the staff are congested in their working places. On the employee performance, the study concludes that employees complete their projects on time while adhering to professional conduct in execution of project work. The study also concludes that teamwork is embraced during project work execution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It was established that funds allocated for projects was delayed in receipt from national government and also in release to contractors hence affecting the quality of services provided. The study recommends that the National Government should put in place mechanisms that will eliminate the challenges encountered during transfer of money to the counties. Furthermore, the County should come up with mechanisms to ensure additional revenue is collected that will supplement the effort of the national Government.
2. The leadership of the County Government should show more commitment to staff issues of motivation. This will help improve staff motivation to perform optimally so that they can continue providing more quality services.
3. Since the study established that involvement of top management in project work highly influenced the quality of projects delivered. The study recommends top management should be technical officers conversant with the project implementation, who are performance oriented and whose main agenda is to serve the general public not their selfish interest.
4. The study also recommends regular training for project staff since project management field is one that is constantly evolving with new discoveries being made all the time. This will help improve the staff capability and competence to deliver County Government programmes or projects.
5. In addition, the study recommends provision of spacious and more conducive workplace environment to help increase staff right attitude, productivity, innovation and creativity

arising from satisfied staff who will then be able to provide solutions to County Government needs.

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