



WORKING ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCES EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY AMONG PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN IMENTI NORTH SUB COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

The government has stepped up effort to offer attractive terms and conditions of service to its employees. It has also provided training and development opportunities, career progression, and an enabling environment to its employees to enable them offer services. However, their level of performance has not increased as expected. The objective of the study was to determine how working environment influences employee productivity among public primary school teachers in Imenti north sub county. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. This study was carried out in the 21 public primary schools in Imenti North Sub County, targeting the population of teachers' service commission. The questionnaire was used to collect the data from the sample. It was also found that the employees would like to work in an organization where the working environment is friendly; they argued that they can work better and more effectively in such a working environment. The study also revealed that majority of the respondents would be satisfied if only the working environment was conducive. Therefore, the teachers' service commission has to look for other ways of motivating its teachers by ensuring good working environment.

Keywords: working environment, employee, productivity, teachers

1. Introduction

Employee productivity is a result of employee's satisfaction. In employee satisfaction, the state of satisfaction varies from person to person. It depends on a number of both

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psychological and physical variables which correlate with satisfaction behaviors. Employees are the key assets thus assessing their engagement and satisfaction is necessary. The result of highly engaged and satisfied employees is overall improvement in productivity index and reduction in grievances. This in turn leads to a better organizational and performance (Dessler 2009).

Organizations should equip employee's with competences and skills through training, feedback and development to ensure achievement of set targets. Provision of comparatively higher pay, an equitable payment system, and real opportunities for promotion, considerate and participative management, a reasonable degree of social interaction, interesting and varied tasks, and a high degree of autonomy over work pace and methods will lead to high employee productivity and individual employee productivity, (Chhabra 2005). How the management establishes a shared understanding about what is to be achieved, how it is achieved, and an approach to managing people which increases their probability of achieving job related success will translate to high productivity in key result areas such as timely provision of quality services and high employee morale.

In Kenya, a study done by Majanga, Nasongo and Sylvia (2010) on the influence of class size on classroom interaction in the wake of Free Primary Education (FPE), they found that FPE created increased class sizes, shortage of teachers, heavy teachers' working load and lack of teacher motivation. They further found that teachers are demoralized with heavy workloads, handling many lessons, many pupils and work for long hours. Sirima and Poipoi (2010) also reported in a study in Busia District in Kenya that public secondary school teachers with high levels of job satisfaction tend to have high social and psychological atmosphere in the classroom that result in high productivity and effectiveness in job performance and willingness to stay longer

2. Statement of the Problem

The government has stepped up effort to offer attractive terms and conditions of service to its employees. It has also provided training and development opportunities, career progression, and an enabling environment to its employees to enable them offer services. However, their level of performance has not increased as expected. Through complaints lodged in the media on August 2015 when teachers went on strike, there are a lot of challenges that teachers mentioned which had adversely affected their performance. Their dissatisfaction can be exemplified by poor delivery of services and slow implementation of government policies and programs leading to cry from the stakeholders both internal and external and especially the parents and pupils.

On the other hand, the government has over the years implemented new reforms, recruited more teaching staff and employed some on temporary basis to curb the shortage of teachers. In year 2002, the government introduced performance contracts whereby the employer and employee agree on targets to be achieved in any given year in order to institutionalize a culture of accountability, transparency and a measure of achievement (Kenya Gazette, 2002). However, the teachers declined signing of the performance contracts and in spite of all these government efforts to modernize the education sectors by introducing reforms, the level of teachers satisfaction which should be translated to higher efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery remains a dream to be achieved. It is in this strength that this research seeks to explore the underlying factors which influence employee productivity.

3. General Objective

To determine how working environment influences employee productivity among public primary school teachers in Imenti North Sub County.

3.1 Research Questions

To what extent do working environment influences employee productivity among public primary school teachers in Imenti North Sub County?

3.2 Scope of the study

The study population included all primary school teachers within the 21 public primary schools within Imenti North Sub County. These schools are under the management of county government of Meru.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Hawthorne Effect Theory

The Hawthorne effect theory was conducted at the western electric company on the effect of lighting on production and employee morale between 1923 and 1932 (Cole, 1999). The conclusion of the studies was that social factors other than physical conditions in the work place affect employee performance. This finding provided strong evidence that people work for purposes other than pay, which paved way for researchers to investigate other factors in employee productivity. Locke developed an idea known as value discrepancy theory. This theory suggests that a person's employee productivity comes from what they feel is important rather than the fulfillment or

unfulfillment of their needs. Berry, (1997) explains that, what a person considers important or valuable has stronger effects on his/her satisfaction. This hypothesis describes how values operate on satisfaction. Satisfaction with a job factor will depend on the importance of the factor and on the difference between what is desired and how much is received.

Career development involves, career advancement opportunities within the organization, career development opportunities, such as job specific training and organizational commitment to professional development. Employee relationship with management is aspect touches on communication between employees and senior management, autonomy and independence, management recognition of employee performance, and employee relationship with the immediate supervisor. Work environment involves flexibility to balance life and work issues, meaningfulness of the job, organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility, overall corporate culture, relationship with co-workers and the work itself. Unlike the classical job design and the scientific management model of job design, jobs should be humanistic and able to satisfy the needs of the job holder thereby increasing his/her satisfaction and enjoyment. Models of job design include; job enrichment, job enlargement, job rotation and autonomous work groups.

4.2 Empirical Review

4.2.1 Working Environment

According to Michaelowa (2002) jobs satisfaction thus seems to reduce absence, turnover and perhaps accident rates. He further stated that one of the surest signs of deteriorating conditions in an organization is low employee productivity. In its more sinister forms, it is behind wildcat strikes, slowdowns absences and employee turnover. It also may be a part of grievances low performance, disciplinary problems and other difficulties. He cited one company with declining employee productivity which faced a substantial rise in certain personnel problem indexes over a period of 4 years. Absences rose 50 percent, and turnover rose 70 percent. Grievances increased 38 percent and disciplinary layoffs climbed 44 percent. All this difficulties were traced primarily to workers' dissatisfaction with their jobs.

Employee productivity has been defined in several different ways but the most general way is to define it as an attitudinal variable. It is simply how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs (Spector 1997). The review of related literature leads to the assumption that the factors which may influence an industrial

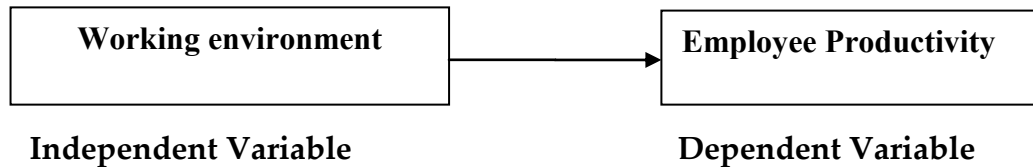
worker's employee productivity and the one of a knowledge worker may differ on degree and scale along the components which makeup the employee productivity of the former (Sampath 2006).

In another study of employee productivity among industrial and technical educators, demographic factors explained little of the variance in respondents' reported level of employee productivity (Brewer & McMahan-Landers 2003) thereby suggesting that other factors affect employee productivity in the given population, supporting a similar conclusion by Saiyadain (2003). Among factors affecting employee productivity of knowledge workers feedback, professionalism and autonomy, job involvement, high performance work systems and opportunity for meaningful input into decision making process have been found to improve employee productivity.

It was found that service conditions (Bajpai & Srivastava 2004), job security organization culture perception of fairness in the company's compensation program also influence employee productivity. Promotion opportunity and respectful treatment figure out in many of the studies as influencing employee productivity of employees. In addition, there are researchers who believe that employee productivity is a result of both employees' expectations and aspirations and their existing status or as multidimensional attitudes towards their jobs and working places (Hamermesh, 2001). From this argument, it seems reasonable that the level of employee productivity changes based on working conditions, demographic characteristics, and expectations in the future career or the type of work being carried out. Research findings support the idea that an employee might be satisfied with a particular group of job attributes, while not with others (Qu and Tse, 1996).

In line with this argument, it may be possible to suggest that employee productivity is an abstract of a variety of components in the business where one works. In a comprehensive empirical investigation of the basic determinants of employee productivity carried out among 11,000 employees, one sees that social security is the primary factor (Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman, 1959). In a number of research studies completed in the 1970s, the most significant factors influencing the level of employee productivity included gender, age, experience, well-paying salary, promotion opportunities, and context of jobs, control, and education (Sousa and Poza, 2000).

4.2.2 Conceptual Framework



5. Research Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. This design seeks to establish factors associated with certain outcomes, conditions or behaviors and occurrences. Thus, it is the best to use in determining the factors affecting employee training practices. Descriptive survey research design makes use of questionnaires which makes it easy to collect and analyze data. This means that the researcher came up with a comprehensive document concerning the subject study.

This study was carried out in the 21 public primary schools in Imenti North Sub County, targeting the population of teachers' service commission. There are 233 primary school teachers who were the respondents of the study. This means that the researcher carried out the study in a place where all employees were represented. The study conducted a census of head teachers and deputy head teacher's cadres. According to Kothari (2010), a sample size of 10-30% or above is a good representative of the population. For the other teaching staff, the study used a sample of 39% which was selected using simple random sampling. Using this method, a sample of 92 respondents was used. The questionnaire was used to collect the data from the sample. It was organized and developed along the key research questions, which were administered to the employees of teachers' service commission. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, percentages and measures of central tendency such as mean, mode and median graphs using computer application packages especially SPSS and excel was used to analyze the data and presented using tables, charts.

6. Data Analysis and Presentation

The response rate was 78% where by male teachers were 65.5 % and female teachers were 34.5 % thus the total sample did not responded.

Table 1: Importance of Work Environment

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very Important	57	78.9
Important	11	15.6
Not Important	4	5.5
I Don't Know	0	0
Total	72	100

Table 1 above indicates that 78.9% of the respondents value work environment as a very important factor in job satisfaction, 15.6% valued it as an important factor while 5.5% did not value work environment.

Figure 1: Responses on importance of Work Environment

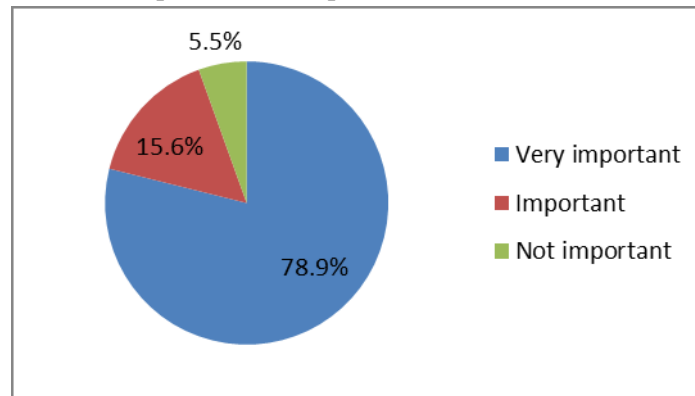
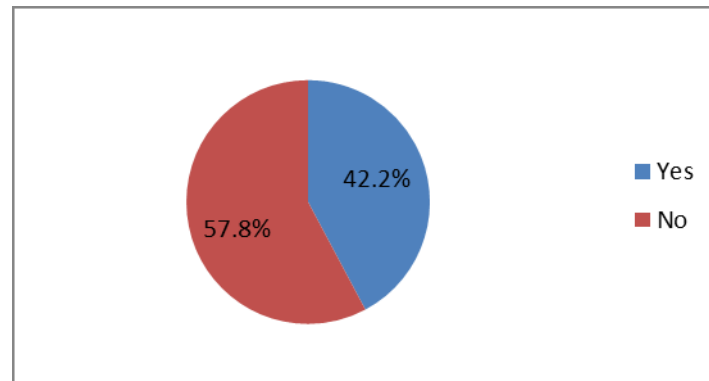


Table 2: Satisfaction on Working Environment

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	42.2
No	42	57.8
Total	72	100

The table 2 above indicates that 42.2% of the respondents are satisfied with the current working environment while 57.8% are not satisfied with the current working environment, thus majority are not satisfied hence more need to be done.

Figure 2: Responses on Satisfaction of Working Environment



7. Summary of the Findings

The study found that 78.9% of the respondents value work environment as a very important factor in job satisfaction, 15.6% valued it as an important factor while 5.5% did not value work environment as an important factor in promoting job satisfaction. 42.2% of the respondents are satisfied with the current working environment while 57.8% are not satisfied with the current working environment, thus majority are not satisfied hence more need to be done.

It was also found that the employees would like to work in an organization where the working environment is friendly; they argued that they can work better and more effectively in such a working environment. The study also revealed that majority of the respondents would be satisfied if only the working environment was conducive.

8. Conclusion

Money is not the only satisfying factor. There are other satisfying factors which are ignored by the most of employers. A satisfied employee is always happy but a dissatisfied employee is a stressed person who might lead to mental illness and thus lead to waste of time and the employer loses much through sickness, medical expenses and low productivity and may lead to loss of employees through death or labor turnover. Satisfaction is a human need in any organization and thus every employer should look for ways and means of satisfying their employees. It is continuous process whereby one level is satisfied one should look for ways of and means of satisfying the other need. Satisfaction is a psychological and should concern with intrinsic forces operating within an individual and impels one to behave in a certain way.

In order to satisfy the teachers, the human resource department needs to understand the needs of the teachers, and know the weak areas in satisfying and try to work towards a solution in satisfaction.

9. Recommendations

Therefore, the teachers' service commission has to look for other ways of motivating its teachers by ensuring good working environment, and more so rewarding the high achievers through issuing them with recommendation letters, promoting them or giving them a rather competitive task like acting position. This will make teachers work harder as they will see themselves as being recognized and have a high morale.

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