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Supervisor Support and Organizational Performance of Public Universities in MT. Kenya Region, Kenya

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Abstract		**Original Research Article**

This study sought to establish the influence of supervisor support on organization performance of Public Universities in Mt. Kenya region, Kenya. The study was guided mainly by one general objective: to establish the effect of supervisor support on organizational performance of Public Universities in Mt. Kenya region, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study population was made up of members of non-teaching employees drawn from 8 Public Universities in Mt. Kenya region, Kenya with a total staff population of 1,647. A sample of 192 public University employees was used for the study. The sample was selected using multistage sampling technique. Questionnaires were used to collect primary data from the sampled population. In order to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, pretesting of the research instruments were conducted in Laikipia University. The research instrument was tested and found to be valid and reliable. The data collected was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences. The researcher administered a research questionnaire individually to employees who were the target population to collect both qualitative and quantitative data which was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive research design was adopted to generate inferential statistics. Pearson's correlation, regression and ANOVA analysis were embraced in inferential statistics. The study established the following aspects of supervisor support as having an impact on organizational performance; conflict management, interpersonal relations and supervisor guidance. The findings of the study showed that employees were not contented with the style of management and promotions in the Universities they were working in. The study recommends that Universities need to change of leadership style to transformational leadership style that includes of all employees. The study commends that more studies be carried out throughout the country, Kenya in private firms for a broad perspective on the relationship between organizational performance and Supervisor Support.

Keywords: Supervisor support, Organization performance and Mt. Kenya region, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Supervisor support is the degree which supervisors act in a way that employees that work under them use on job knowledge, expertise and attitudes gained in training [1]. Mainya [2] refers as magnitude to which supervisors guide employees in involvement of training, innovation skills and knowledge realization and offer acknowledgement to employees' involved in these activities. Bates [3] well defined supervisor support as the degree which supervisors emphasize and support the employees on the learning of the skills required in the workplace. Supervisor support also refers to how the supervisors help their employees to demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and attitudes collected from a training program [4]. According to Bhatti *et al.* [5], supervision plays vital roles in training effectiveness thus enhanced work performance.

Without getting support from the supervisor, the transfer of training process cannot be successful. This is because the employee will tend to miss focus when they are not monitored or supervised. It is said to be one of the most powerful tools in enhancing organizational performance through transfer of training as supported by numerous studies [6, 7].

According to Putter [8], the support can be in terms of emotional, instrumental, and at the same time support which is provided before and after any training program. Providing feedback also would be a form of supervisor support [9]. This is because feedback is relatively seen as part of supervisor support whereby the supervisors identify which areas of their employees need to be improved, encouraging them to join the training program, and help them to apply the learned

skills upon completing their job which in turn enhances organizational performance. In addition, Ismail *et al.* [7] stated that supervisor is also responsible for allocating budget for their employee's developmental purpose. This is because, each individual has the rights to increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities, and hence improving organizational performance. Further, Goleman [10] mentioned that good supervisors should be able to develop achievable targets, spread positive attitudes thorough out the organization, as well as increase the employees' awareness on why the training is fundamentally important for them. Congruently, these objectives are achievable if the supervisor gives full support to their employees. The effectiveness of the supervisor support also depends on how the supervisor deals with the employees who resist participating in the training activities [6].

Appropriate supervisor support in workplace that encourages the comfort of employees and therefore increasing individual employee's performance is viewed as a strategy for increasing organizations efficiency and productivity. Employees in a workplace environment work better when comfortable which is a state of mind which relies on both emotional state and physical sensation. Promoting an effective workplace environment must account for the two essentials and when sufficiently provided, it can boost organizational competitiveness. Kenya Vision 2030 strategies identify education as the vehicle that would drive Kenya into a middle income economy. Many working class and secondary school graduates hence are looking for opportunities to pursue University education. This has led to increased number of staff and students in the Public Universities. Overcrowded facilities due to increased student enrolment and employees are likely to impact negatively on staff performance. The growth in enrolment has resulted in a situation where in many universities in the country, physical facilities cannot cope with the number of employees. Therefore, the study sought to establish the effect of supervisor support on organization performance of Public Universities in Mt. Kenya region.

The study took place at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Chuka University, Meru University of Science and Technology, Laikipia University, Karatina University, University of Embu, Kirinyaga University and Murang'a University of Technology. These Public Universities are found in Mt. Kenya region, Kenya.

The knowledge generated from the study is useful to the management of the Public Universities to take actions that shall help them improve their organizational performance. The study findings will also assist Public Universities to focus on creating an operational workplace environment that will improve employees' performance thus improving the organizational performance. The study findings would

contribute to the existing knowledge on organizational performance. The findings and recommendations are useful to policy makers like the Ministry of Education in setting regulations on work environment in organizations and in preparation and implementation of policies since employees in the organizations contribute to the gross domestic product.

Past research on the role of supervisory support has highlighted its beneficial impact on a range of individual, team and organizational outcomes. Supervisory support is described as the employees' perception of the extent to which supervisors value their contributions and care about their wellbeing [11]. The role of supervisory support as a buffer for job stress in individuals has been well documented [12]. Supervisory support has also been found to raise levels of employees' trust in the organization with supervisors embodying the organization's goals, values and priorities which in turn were found to positively influence the employee-organization relationship over and above impersonal formal organizational structures [13]. With respect to innovation, studies have indicated how supervisory support behaviors of encouraging innovation, skill building, open communication, rewards and recognition and effective management of responsibilities led employees to willingly participate in promoting initiatives aimed at promoting innovative environmental policies [10]. Other individual level outcomes being influenced by supervisory support include career satisfaction [14], low emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and low turnover intent. Thus past research establishes supervisory support as an important construct in organizational behavior research and justifies its inclusion in the present study.

Elton Mayo's Hawthorne Effect Theory relates to supervisor support variable which focuses on supervisor's ability to encourage employees to participate in training, innovation and knowledge acquisition. This theory implies that social conditions could affect organizational performance particularly supervisor's support or attention and team member relationships. Although workplace environment conditions are very significant in an organization, social and physical attention from supervisors could improve productivity and performance in Public Universities. Therefore, supervisors should respect staff and pay more attention to them during work in order to enhance organizational performance.

According to Filippova [15] the most constant factor for explaining the relationship between the workplace environment and transfer is the support receive and how employees use their new skills and knowledge. Support from the supervisors is one of the most influential tools of enhancing transmission of training [16]. Supervisor affects transfer outcomes directly or indirectly because the affect trainee's

motivation in transferring different skills in the duties given [17].

Supervisors are the first level of management who are given the major duties and responsibilities to form and lead work groups in organizations [18]. Supervisor' personal role is important because it reassures positive relations and increases self-confidence of the employees and in return improves performance [19]. Conflicts happen at workplace hence supervisors attempt to resolve them in order to make the workplace environment conducive to work in hence increasing organizational productivity. Immediate supervisors act as advocate for employees, facilitates the allocation resources required by the employees so that they can carry out the duties given and providing encouragement for attainment of the targets set. In order to sustain employee performance supervisors and employees need to perform their part [20]. Employees in Public Universities require supervisor support since it makes them feel cared for hence they work better to meet their targets [21].

The conceptual framework demonstrates the association between the dependent and independent variables. The independent variable was supervisor support. This variable is projected to impact the dependent variables being organization performance of Public Universities in Kenya, Kenya.
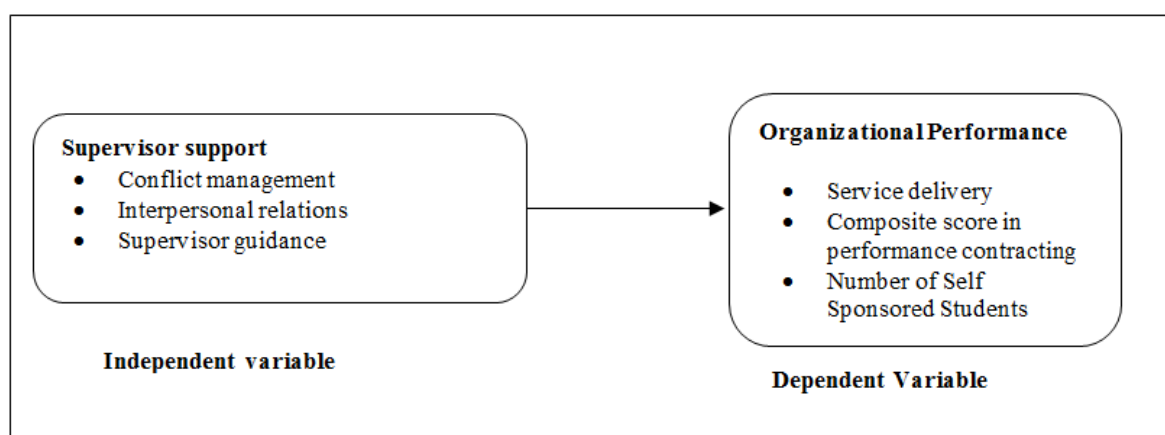

Fig-1: Conceptual framework on Supervisor Support and organizational performance
Source: Researcher, 2019

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study covered Supervisor support and organizational performance. The study took place at Meru University of Science and Technology, Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Chuka University, Kirinyaga University Muranga University of Technology, Laikipia University, Karatina University and University of Embu. These eight Public Universities are found in Mt. Kenya region. A research permit was sourced from National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation.

The study used a cross-sectional descriptive research design; this is a process of collecting data from the members or associates of a population in order to conclude the current status of the subject of study with respect to one or more variables [22]. The descriptive survey design method was useful in exploring how supervisor support affects performance of Public Universities since its data from the respondents was used to determine the current status of the subject under study with respect to the variables. It was an efficient approach of collecting data and generalizes the outcomes regarding characteristic of sample of a population, current practices, conditions feelings and needs.

The target population of the study consisted of 8 Public Universities in Mt. Kenya region. Non-academic employees employed on permanent terms in these Public Universities were used in the study. Table 1 shows the Public Universities in Mt. Kenya region as well as the population of the non-teaching staff.

The study used multistage sampling technique to sample Public Universities and non-teaching employees working in them. Multistage sampling refers to sampling plans where the sampling is carried out in stages using smaller and smaller sampling units at each stage [23]. The technique was chosen since each Public University has an equal chance of being selected. The first stage was sampling Public Universities which was 50% of the University population since it can give good reliability of the target population [24]. At the second stage the researcher sampled 30% of non-academic employees conveniently in the sampled Public Universities to get the sample size which was considered adequate for descriptive study [25]. Table 2 shows the sample size.

Table-1: Target Population

Universities	Population of non-teaching staff
Dedan Kimathi University of Technology	150
Chuka University	250
Meru University of Science and Technology	103
Laikipia University	485
Karatina University	140
University of Embu	202
Kirinyaga University	140
Muranga University of Technology	147
Total	1647

Table-2: Sample Size

Universities	Population	Sample	Percentage
Kirinyaga University	140	42	6.6
Muranga University of Technology	147	44	6.9
Meru University of Science and Technology	103	31	4.8
Chuka University	250	75	11.7
Total	640	192	30%

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to determine whether Supervisor's Support had an effect on employees' performance. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with statements on supervisor support. Table 3 shows the results.

Table-3: Effect of Supervisors Support on Organizational Performance

Statements	Not at all	Low extent	Moderate extent	Great extent	Very Great Extent	Mean	SDev
My supervisor manages conflicts at my workplace	0.0%	2.9%	37.1%	37.6%	18.8%	3.70	0.80
I can rely on my supervisor to help me out with a work problem	0.0%	10.6%	49.4	27.1%	10.0%	3.38	0.81
My roles & responsibilities are clearly stated	0.0%	8.8%	35.9%	37.1%	15.3%	3.61	0.86
My supervisor seeks information from employees when making important decision	0.0%	16.5%	41.2%	24.7%	14.7%	3.39	0.94

The findings in Table 2 revealed that most respondents (93.5%) agreed that their supervisors managed conflicts at their workplace (Mean =3.7, SD = 0.80). on the other hand, 86.5% of the respondents agreed that they can rely on their supervisors to help them out with a work problem (Mean =3.4, SD = 0.81) whereas 88.3% of the respondents agreed that their roles and responsibilities were clearly stated (Mean =3.6, SD = 0.86). Further, 80.6% of the respondents agreed that their supervisors sought information from employees when making important decisions Mean =3.4, SD = 0.94.

These findings suggest that performance management provisions are significant tools for aligning individuals' performances to their organizational objectives. Majority of the respondents held a view that supervisors are responsible for the day-to-day performance of an individual department or section. From content analysis, respondents expressed that the supervisors should have experience in what the department does. The findings showed that supervisors should help the team understand performance targets and goals, training or ensuring that workers are properly trained for their specific roles, providing real-time feedback on worker performance, sharing organization updates and new objectives with team members, assisting in resolving emergencies, identifying and resolving workplace problems, including lateness or

nonattendance as well as providing reports and activity updates to management.

Respondents were asked open ended questions and they viewed that supervisors are responsible for the day-to-day performance of an individual department or section. In light of the above-mentioned, respondents expressed that the supervisors should have experience in what the department does and therefore should earn the position on experience. The advice of respondents on supervisory tasks included: Helping the team understand performance targets and goals, training or ensuring that workers are properly trained for their specific roles, providing real-time feedback on worker performance, sharing organization updates and new objectives with team members, identifying and resolving workplace problems.

Correlation analysis on the effect of Supervisors Support on Organizational Performance of Public Universities

The study conducted correlation analysis in order to ascertain the relationship and the strength of associations between Supervisors Support and Organizational Performance of Public Universities. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table-4: Correlation analysis on the effect of Supervisors Support on Organizational Performance of Public Universities

		Organizational Performance of Public Universities
Supervisors Support	Pearson's Correlation	0.980**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	170

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 3 shows that there was a positive significant linear relationship between Supervisors Support and organizational performance of public Universities in Mount Kenya region (r =0.614, p<0.01). This implies that improving supervisor's support will enhance organizational performance. These findings are in agreement with a study by Baldwon [6] which asserts that Support from the supervisors is one of the most influential tools of enhancing transmission of training. Cromwell and Kolb [17] further note that supervisors affect transfer outcomes directly or indirectly because they affect trainee's motivation in transferring different skills in the duties given. Supervisor' personal role is important because it reassures positive relations and increases self-confidence of the employees and in return improves performance [19].

CONCLUSION

Supervisor support which masquerades as staff training and development, fair treatment and clear organization strategic direction would boost the employees' performance and thus organizational performance. The employees want to be appreciated for their work through fair treatment, training and development. Supervision to some degree can highly influence performance of employees, from the study; the limited abilities in decision making could highly impact on employees' performance. However, the employees appreciate the effort their organizations put through training and development in order to achieve the desired skills and knowledge needed to perform their duties.

The study findings support the Two Factor Theory which points out that the environment in which the job is performed motivates the employees to perform better. The findings also support Elton Mayo's Hawthorne Effect Theory that workplace conditions influence productivity and performance of employees as well as organizational performance.

Supervisors must reduce the tendency to micromanage and instead display that they have confidence in the ability of their team members and trusts them to do their work efficiently. Periodic meetings with employees to air their grievances to management to serve as a motivating factor to the employees. Managers should also be counseled on their relationships with their subordinates. The organization should have a good program in place for their employees work life balance as this can be a great factor to motivate and retain them.

The researcher analyzed supervisor support and organizational performance of Universities in Mt. Kenya region, Kenya. A related study ought to be conducted in government institutions to establish whether it will yield similar information. This would allow the managements to better understand the factors that influence organizational performance and how they can manipulate these to their optimal potential, and in turn get a competitive edge over the rest of the competitors. A replication of this study should be carried out in the private firms to demonstrate the significance of workplace environment on organizational performance.

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