



**INFLUENCE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG  
NON-TEACHING STAFF MEMBERS IN SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Employee engagement has become a household name in contemporary human resource management practices. Organizations have to keep their employees engaged to maintain competitive advantage and keep up with changing trends in business. Poor human resource management practices in universities are evident. This has resulted in employees providing poor service to clients because they are not engaged in their work. The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of human resource management practices on employee engagement among non-teaching staff in selected public universities in Kenya. The objectives of the study were to investigate the influence of organizational support on employee engagement among non-teaching staff, to determine the influence of organizational justice on employee engagement among non-teaching staff, to explore the influence of supervisor support on employee engagement among non-teaching staff, and to analyse the influence of employee work environment on employee engagement among non-teaching staff in selected public universities in Kenya. The target population was 1673 non-teaching staff of the three selected universities out of which 321 formed the sample size. Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents in management and simple random sampling technique was used to select non-teaching staff to avoid bias. Instruments for data collection were questionnaires which were distributed to respondents.*

**Keywords:** *Organizational Support, Organizational Justice, Supervisor Support, Employee Work Environment Employee Engagement*

## INTRODUCTION

Organizations are facing new encounters in recent times in their efforts to remain viable. The challenges they face include satisfying the requirements of the diverse workforce, high-performance pressures, introducing latest technologies and globalization. The interest on how they can keep employees engaged has therefore increased among organization's management given that a lot of research has claimed the benefits of employee engagement on both individual and business level results (LePine, Crawford & Rich, 2010).

It is no doubt that engaged employees demonstrate a high passion for their job, job attachment, open commitment, increased productivity, and they go extra miles while disengaged employees are a liability to the organization and barely challenge the status quo (Albornoz, 2011). Due to the importance of maintaining the engagement of employees, it is valuable to understand the variables that can lead to high levels of engagement among employees.

Employee engagement has been defined by many researchers as a fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Braine, 2011). According to Price (2011) employee engagement refers to positive approaches held by employees about their jobs and also the motivation and energy they exert into their work. He also concludes that engagement leads to positive employee conducts that lead to increased performance levels and eventually to organizational success. Reference is made to Scarlett (2010) who points out that employee engagement is a quantifiable degree of an employee's affirmative or destructive emotional affection to his job, co-workers, and organization that greatly impacts his enthusiasm to learn and perform at work. According to Markos (2010) the concept of employee engagement is built on the basis of earlier models like job satisfaction, employee commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviour though employee engagement is broader in scope.

Research reveals that there are several factors that affect employee engagement in organizations. According to MacLeod and Clarke (2011), there are four critical enablers of employee engagement. These factors include leadership, engaging managers, employee voice, and integrity. Organizational cultures which consider growth opportunities, considerate treatment of employees, teamwork, pleasant workplace conditions, flexible working practices, and good leadership and management practices promote employee engagement (Gujral, 2013). According to a study carried out by Mokaya and Kipyegon (2014), performance management, personal development, remuneration package and workplace recreation were considered to affect employee engagement. According to Bakker and Leiter (2010) employees who are often engaged at work and who are also active and committed are an important resource in modern organizations. These employees increase profitability through higher production, customer satisfaction, improved sales, and employee preservation. Heartfield (2012) asserts that in order to create an environment for employee satisfaction and engagement, it is vital to know the factors that affect employee engagement. Time, money, and energy must be spent by organizations on programmes, processes, and factors that will have a positive impact on employee engagement.

Current developments of businesses and globalization of economic events have enabled companies to attract new high-performing employees as well as maintaining the key personnel (Whittington, 2010). Employees must work in environments that provide a sense of challenge and meaningfulness for them. Employees who are mentally and emotionally connected to their jobs and who are willing to apply unrestricted effort to assist their companies to succeed are the best resource for managers (Wambui, 2010). Modern day employees expect operational autonomy, status and job satisfaction while performing their duties.

According to Danish (2014) a favourable work environment can alleviate job demands, motivate employees and can enhance their willingness to dedicate themselves to their job. Price (2011) contends that employee engagement denotes positive approaches held by employees about their occupations and also the motivation and strength they exert and concludes that engagement leads to positive employee behaviours that translate to increased performance and ultimately to organizational success.

A study by Mwangi (2014) argues that universities are facing competition and inadequate financing from the government and the challenge of recruiting and retaining qualified staff and having performance has resulted in performance contracting, performance appraisals, ISO 9001 certification being introduced in public universities in line with government guidelines and as processes to ensure that they remain competitive.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to Amarakoon and Wickramasinghe (2010) employees working in public institutions need to be engaged and productive for these institutions to effectively perform and achieve their set goals. Despite employee engagement being a common topic in the human resource consultancy market, existing research reveals that little academic research has been carried out on this topic (Shuck & Rocco, 2011). Poor HRM practices in universities are evident, these include; lack of organizational justice, poor physical and psychological work environment, lack of organizational support, and lack of supervisor support. These are caused by lack of trained personnel, poor communication and lack of involvement of employees in decision making, which have resulted to poor service delivery, high staff turnover, lack of innovativeness and work overload. Ng'ethe (2013) conducted a study on determinants of academic staff retention in public universities in Kenya and concluded that promotion, remuneration and leadership style had

significant influence on academic staff retention. This study was consistent with the present study which focused on the influence of management practices on employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in public universities rather than determinants of academic staff retention. Hence the motivation for this study which was to address these problems and fill the existing gaps in engagement literature and identify the most significant factors that influence employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in Kenyan public universities.

### **Research Objectives**

The general objective of this study was to investigate the influence of employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in selected public universities in Kenya. The specific objectives were:-

- To determine the influence of organizational support on employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in selected public universities in Kenya.
- To determine the influence of organizational justice on employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in selected public universities in Kenya.
- To explore the influence of supervisor support on employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in selected public universities in Kenya.
- To analyse the influence of employee work environment on employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in selected public universities in Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a theoretical framework for this study and was developed by Blau (1964) and Emerson (1972). The theory explains that what the person will pick out to

maintain depends on how satisfied a person will be with the relationship (Jamandre & Arce, 2011). The social exchange theory declares that work relationships progress over time into credulous, loyal, and shared obligations as long as all parties involved abide by exchange or compensation rules. According to Blau, SET provides a foundation for managers to appreciate their roles to generate the feelings of employee obligation and positive work approaches in an organization. Andrew and Sofian (2012) confirmed that the Social Exchange Theory has greatly been used in recent studies on employee engagement. According to Abu Khalifeh and Mat Som (2013), employees will decide the level of engagement in relation to the resources they receive from the organization. SET also has been used to examine the psycho-social aspect in mentoring relationship, especially when mutual trusts are required for employees (Chad, 2014).

The implication for this study is that workers should be provided with resources from their organization like a decent salary, acknowledgement, and opportunities of advancement. This will make them feel obliged to respond in kind and reciprocate to the organization. Fair application of effective organizational policies and processes in the work surroundings can make employees feel that their organization gives attention to their well-being. Alternatively, when the organization fails to provide support in terms of resources, individuals are more likely to withdraw and disengage themselves from their roles, which eventually might result in burnout (Schaufeli, 2013).

### **Stacey Adams Equity Theory**

Adams (1965) is the proponent of Equity Theory and she argues that employees seek to preserve equity between the input they bring into an occupation which includes experience, education, commitment, time, and effort and the consequence which is recognition, promotion, and pay increase. According to Gupta, (2011) Stacey Adam's Equity theory is based on the principle that people want to be treated justly at work. Individuals who perceive

themselves as either under-rewarded or over-rewarded will experience anguish, which results to efforts to reinstate equity within the organization (Ngethe, 2013). Failure to find equity may make them behave negatively, for example, they may quit. When high number of employees quit the organization, loses will occur in terms of gaining competitive advantage since majority join competitors (Chiboiwa *et al.*, 2010).

The theory therefore leads us in appreciating what may inspire an employee to be engaged in their work as they keep comparing what employees receive in other comparable organization in order to realize a stable state of the of the input-outcome proportions. In this study, the theory guides organizations in exercising justice when dealing with their employees. Fair remuneration, recognition and appraisal systems should be practised among employees so that they can reciprocate by putting more effort in their work.

### **Kahn's Three Psychological Condition Theory**

Kahn's (1990) three psychological condition theory explains the positive connection between core self-evaluations and employee engagement. According to Kahn, employee engagement develops when three psychological conditions are satisfied: psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. Psychological meaningfulness denotes the positive sense of return on investments of self in role presentation. It argues that work is meaningful and significant enough to add worth to endeavours at work. Psychological safety involves assurance in showing self without fright or negative costs to self-image, rank, or profession (Lee, 2012). When employees believe that their organization provides a consistent and expected working atmosphere and thus their performance and behaviour do not create danger in their interpersonal relationships they are more likely to become engaged. Lastly, psychological availability involves the physical, emotional, and psychological possessions to complete work. When employees are convinced that they have the

necessary resources to complete work they then become engaged in their job. The availability of necessary assets can free employees to focus on their work without worrying about a lack of resources (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

In this study, the theory postulates that organizations should provide a safe and secure environment for its workers which will lead to engagement. Safe working gear to protect employees, warnings against dangerous chemicals, slippery floor, proper ventilation, safe arrangement are just but some of the areas that employers should keep in mind to keep workers safe and engaged. The environment should also be such that roles are well defined, there is autonomy to perform and that there is no job overload.

## Review of Literature

### Organizational Support and Employee Engagement

According to Gagné *et al.* (2010) perceived organizational support is the degree to which employees trust that their organization values their work and cares about their welfare. Baranet *et al.* (2012) asserts that perceived organizational support is the opinion of employees about the actions taken by organizations for their development and improvement. In a research carried out by Wahyu (2014) the studies focus on the influence of supportive leadership and employee engagement. The result shows that there is a direct positive relationship between supportive leadership and employee engagement.

The organization, through its HR department should identify strategies to motivate their employees so that they work diligently (Hassan *et al.*, 2013). They have an obligation to formulate developmental programmes that will give employees enthusiasm to assist in achieving the vision and values of the organization thereby giving it competitive advantage. Studies by Sinha and Sinha (2012) suggest that career planning and support is part of employee development which helps employees maintain the skills required to remain viable in the

job market and also assist them manage various aspects of their lives.

### Organizational Justice and Employee Engagement

Organisational justice is a personal assessment of the virtuous behaviour of all organisational members (Van der Bank, 2010). This definition of organisational justice is a descriptive approach which seeks to understand why employees view certain events as just, as well as the consequences that follow from these evaluations (Hlongwane, 2010). Two dimensions of organisational justice will be discussed in this study and they include procedural justice, and interactional justice.

Procedural justice refers to the objectivity of the means or processes by which decisions are completed or outcomes are attained. Distributive justice is that which focuses on the perceptions of fairness in the distribution and allocation of resources. Interactional justice is defined as the fairness of the collaborative treatment an employee receives during the implementation of organizational procedures (Pilvinyte, 2013). In a research carried out on the impact of organizational justice on employee engagement in the banking sector of Pakistan, it was concluded that distributive, procedural and interactional justice are separate forms or different from each other (Williamson & Williams, 2011). However, all these dimensions of organizational justice have an influence on employee engagement. For the purpose of this study the researcher will focus on two dimensions that is, procedural justice and interactional justice.

### Supervisor Support and Employee Engagement

According to researchers Kossek *et al.* (2011) supervisor work-life support is defined as an employee's perception that their supervisor cares about his or her work-life well-being. Organizational support theory states that the supervisor act is a pointer of the intentions of the organization (Pati & Kumar, 2010). A supervisor is a symbol of the organization and therefore, a good relationship between the employee and the supervisor can

present a good relationship between the company and the employees, so that employees feel devoted to the organization and want to be involved in the organization (Ariani, 2015). According to Rothmann and Welsh (2013) a supervisor's traits which include ability to communicate with employees, availability when needed, treating employees with dignity and respect will stimulate engagement at work.

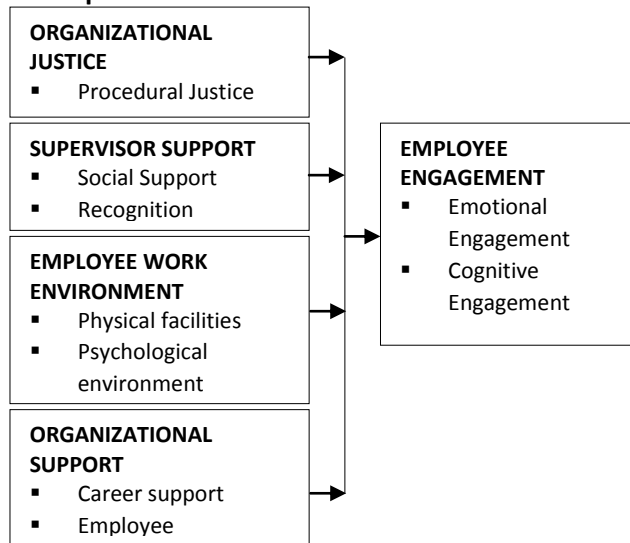
According to the Social Exchange Theory, relationships are formed by people where each person's exchange will provide obligation to others to offer service or provide benefits. It is the underlying theory of inter-personal relationships and trust (Ariani, 2015). According to a research by Crawford, LePine and Rich (2010) social support is a job resource that has a direct positive relationship with employees' work engagement.

### Employee Work Environment and Employee Engagement

Work environment denotes the atmosphere of an organization where employees perform their duties. It is a significant aspect that affects employee's fulfilment and commitment towards an organization. Aneela (2012) carried out a research and established that various foundations were noted in literature for defining the work environment. The foundations included working conditions, psychological climate, organizational climate and organizational culture.

According to Danish, Ramzan, and Ahmad (2013) work environment is related to the climate of a particular organization where its employees carry out their tasks. Mehboob and Bhutto (2012) explain that work environment is a comprehensive element which includes the physical, psychological and social aspects that make up the working condition. Ahmad (2013) argues that facilitative and harmless work environment can entice the employees as their needs are likely to be fulfilled. Organizations should strategize their work environments in order to escalate the level of employees' obligation and enthusiasm that eventually would lead to high productivity.

### Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables      Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Self conceptualization (2018)

### METHODOLOGY

This researcher used descriptive research design which helped to describe the state of affairs as it was, in its natural state, and then reported the findings as agreed with Kombo (2006). This study was carried out in three selected public universities in Kenya and they include Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in Kakamega County, Kibabii University in Bungoma County and Maseno University in Kisumu County. Two level categories of staff formed the population. These categories were management and non-teaching staff. The target population of the research was 44 management staff and 1629 non-teaching staff.

### RESULTS

#### Organizational Support

On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 means Strongly Agree and 1 means Strongly Disagree) expressed the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements regarding organizational support. 5 = Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3 =Not Sure, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree.

**Table 1: Responses on Organizational Support Practices**

	5		4		3		2		1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
There are opportunities for career advancement	49	20	83	33.9	8	3.3	79	32.2	26	10.6
I attend trainings to improve my skills	48	19.6	68	27.8	18	7.3	64	26.1	47	19.2
I am given challenging work to prepare me for higher position	41	16.7	73	29.8	28	11.4	59	24.1	44	18
Internal promotions are done at regular intervals	16	6.5	18	7.3	15	6.1	77	31.4	11	48.6
I am represented in meetings where decisions concerning my job are made	15	6.1	42	17.1	50	20.4	78	31.8	60	24.5
My views are appreciated	16	6.5	69	28.2	74	30.2	48	19.6	38	15.5
There is clear information regarding work from the organization	26	10.6	82	33.5	59	24.1	51	20.8	27	11
I exercise authority in my position	22	9	102	41.6	37	15.1	36	14.7	48	19.6

The specific objective was to determine whether organizational support influenced employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in public universities in Kenya. The researcher used descriptive and inferential statistical methods to make conclusions.

The results of the findings showed that a high percentage of respondents in the study were female as compared to male respondents. It was also discovered that a majority of respondents were between the ages of 31-40 years. Additionally, most respondents were in departments other than ICT, Finance and administration. A majority of the respondents who agreed that they received management support were female and it was discovered that a high percentage of respondents

(78%) who agreed that there was organizational support were married. Although opportunities for career advancement were available, there lacked implementation of the training policy which was available on record but inactive. It was revealed that internal promotions were not done regularly and the voice of employees was not considered in decision making on matters that touched on staff.

#### Organizational Justice

On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 means Strongly Agreed and 1 means Strongly Disagreed) expressed the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements regarding organizational justice. 5 = Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3 =Not Sure, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree.

**Table 2: Responses on Organizational Justice Practices**

	5		4		3		2		1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Procedures are neutral and unbiased	47	19.2	115	46.9	17	6.9	35	14.3	31	12.7
Procedures are based on accurate information	10	4.1	39	15.9	26	10.6	99	40.4	71	29.0
Procedures offer opportunities for appeals of outcomes	49	20	96	31.2	15	6.1	61	24.9	24	9.8
Procedures for decision making take into account the voice of employees	14	5.7	40	16.3	10	4.1	126	51.4	55	22.4
Resources are allocated according to contributions by employees	11	4.5	19	7.8	82	33.5	76	31	57	23.3
Resources are allocated equally	8	3.3	15	6.1	66	26.9	112	45.7	44	18
Resources are allocated according to need	20	8.2	53	21.6	22	9	75	30.6	75	30.6
Outcomes of decisions are sincere and polite	20	8.2	37	15.1	48	19.6	78	31.8	62	25.3



The specific objective was to determine whether organizational justice influenced employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in public universities in Kenya. The researcher also used descriptive and inferential statistical methods to make conclusions. The study findings revealed that procedures for work performance were neutral; they were reviewed regularly and were unbiased. Management recognized the importance of having procedures that were based on accurate information. However, from majority of respondents, it was also discovered that resources were not allocated according to contributions by employees. The resources were not also allocated

according to need. There was no policy on resource allocation which led to discontent among staff who felt they were not treated fairly when it came to allocation of resources. Further outcomes on decisions of appeals were not sincere and polite.

### Supervisor Support

On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 means Strongly Agreed and 1 means Strongly Disagreed) expressed the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements regarding supervisor support practices. 5 = Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3 =Not Sure, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree.

**Table 3: Responses on Supervisor Support Practices**

	5		4		3		2		1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I share challenges encountered during work with the supervisor.	64	26.1	128	52.2	19	7.8	23	9.4	11	4.5
My supervisor is non-judgemental in supervision	33	13.5	95	38.8	56	22.9	36	14.7	25	10.2
There is proper feedback from the supervisor	43	17.6	102	41.6	40	16.3	48	19.6	12	4.9
The supervisor encourages team work	62	25.3	92	37.6	36	14.7	39	15.9	16	6.5
My supervisor has good interpersonal relationship	67	27.3	112	45.7	31	12.7	28	11.4	7	2.9
There is good co-worker relationship at work	55	22.4	93	38	52	22.2	34	13.9	11	4.5
My supervisor respects my views	53	21.6	97	39.6	48	19.6	34	13.9	13	5.3
My Supervisor recognizes hard work	67	27.3	69	28.2	59	24.1	10	4.1	40	16.3

The specific objective was to determine whether supervisor support influenced employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in public universities in Kenya. The researcher used descriptive and inferential statistical methods to make conclusions. From the study findings, majority of employees shared challenges with their supervisors. It was also revealed that supervisors recognized the need to have proper feedback on employee performance. Teamwork was present as shown by the responses by employees. Management ensured that supervisors attended training which was shown by good interpersonal relationship between supervisors and the staff and even among co-workers. Majority of respondents agreed that their supervisors respected their views and recognized hard work.

### Employee Work Environment

On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 means Strongly Agreed and 1 means Strongly Disagreed) expressed the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements regarding employee work environment. 5 = Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3 =Not Sure, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree.

**Table 4: Responses on Employee Work Environment**

	5		4		3		2		1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I am supplied with sufficient supply of working tools	28	11.4	72	29.4	30	12.2	82	33.5	33	13.5
There is proper ventilation in my office, free of noise and pollution	38	15.5	87	35.5	14	5.7	64	26.1	42	17.1
Office space is sufficient	22	9.0	84	34.3	32	13.1	57	23.3	50	20.4
There is proper lighting in the rooms	41	16.7	120	49	24	9.8	39	15.9	21	8.6
I do not experience conflicts at work	13	5.3	72	29.4	40	16.3	84	34.3	36	14.7
I am not harassed or intimidated at work	23	9.4	84	34.3	44	18.0	59	24.1	35	14.3
I receive support from fellow colleagues, supervisors and managers	47	19.2	108	44.1	44	18.0	33	13.5	13	5.3
My job is well designed to show clarity	33	13.5	84	34.3	54	22	34	15.9	35	14.3

The specific objective was to determine whether employee work environment influenced employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in public universities in Kenya. Again, the researcher used descriptive and inferential statistical methods to make conclusions. The study established that there was adequate supply of tools to enable work to be performed efficiently. Majority of employees agreed that they are not harassed at the workplace and that they received support from colleagues. It was also revealed that jobs were well designed to show clarity. There were conflicts but these were

solved amicably by the people in charge of the employees. It was established that there was a welfare officer who listened to conflicts raised by employees and procedures were followed to solve them.

#### Employee Engagement

On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 means Strongly Agreed and 1 means Strongly Disagreed) expressed the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements regarding employee engagement. 5 = Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3 =Not Sure, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree.

**Table 5: Responses on Employee Engagement**

	5		4		3		2		1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I speak highly of organization to my friends	56	22.9	119	48.6	32	13.1	28	11.4	10	4.1
I am proud to work for this institution	72	29.4	111	45.3	25	10.2	31	12.7	6	2.4
Doing my work well is important to me	89	36.3	111	45.3	27	11.0	11	4.5	7	2.9
This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me	49	20.0	130	53.1	36	14.7	25	10.2	5	2.0
I find the work I do full of meaning and purpose	63	25.7	126	51.4	40	16.3	5	2.0	11	4.5
At work, I persist through challenges	62	25.3	127	51.8	31	12.7	18	7.3	7	2.9
I enjoy working toward achieving the organizational objectives	81	33.1	108	44.1	34	13.9	11	4.5	11	4.5
I am proud of the work that I do	85	34.7	100	40.8	35	14.3	17	6.9	8	3.3

The analysis above showed that 71.5% of respondents agreed that they spoke highly of their organizations to friends while 74.7% of the respondents agreed that they were proud to work for the organization. It was also evident that 81.6% of the respondents agreed that working well was important to them and 73.1% of the respondents agreed that the organization had a great deal of meaning to them. The analysis further showed that 77.1% of respondents were in agreement that the work they do was full of meaning and purpose while 77% of respondents agreed that at work, they persist through challenges. Further, it was concluded that 77% of respondents agreed that they enjoy working towards achieving the organizational objectives while 75.6% respondents agreed that they were proud of the work they do.

#### **Organizational Support on Employee Engagement**

The study findings indicated that organizational support influenced employee engagement in selected public universities in Kenya. The findings indicated that there was a significant influence of organizational support on employee engagement at 5% level of significance. It indicated that where organizational support was practiced, employee engagement improved. This statement agreed with Tymon (2011) who endorsed that career support had direct influence on the intrinsic rewards which determines the relationship between organizational support and engagement. This implied that university management needed to support employees to ensure engagement. According to the findings from the respondents who were interviewed, it was revealed that policies that guide on internal promotion so that the process is consistent and fair. Employees need to be represented in meetings through union officials.

The findings of the study also revealed that universities offered opportunities for career advancement for their staff. This showed that the management appreciated the wealth of knowledge from their staff making them perform better. This agreed with Nadiri *et al* (2010) who concludes that employee job satisfaction and performance is

strongly influenced by organizational support. A majority of employees who were interviewed emphasized the need to have a training policy to guide decision making on training staff on the right people, right skills, and at the right time.

It was revealed from the findings of this study that majority of respondents agreed that internal promotions were crucial. They emphasized on the need to have a policy on internal promotions so that some staff did not feel left out in the process. An equitable internal promotion policy would ensure that each and every staff in considered for promotion based on experience, qualification and merit. This would ensure that universities maintained staff who were emotionally attached their jobs and managed other aspects of their lives. This is in line with Stacy Adams theory which states that employees will always compare what they get from an organization with what others in other comparable organizations are getting. If they felt well remunerated, it would bring about a sense of obligation in satisfying the organizational goals.

#### **Organisational Justice on Employee Engagement**

The study findings indicated that organizational justice had a positive influence on employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in public universities in Kenya. The significant positive relationship between organizational justice and employee engagement clearly indicated that allocation of resources to staff according to need was very crucial. The findings are also in line with a study by Abu Khalifeh and Mat Som (2013) who conclude that employees will decide the level of engagement in relation to the resources they receive from the organization. These findings are also in line with the social exchange theory which guided this study and provides a foundation for managers to appreciate their roles to generate the feeling of employee obligation and positive work approaches to an organization.

There was need to ensure that the voice of employee was considered during decision making so that employees felt they are part of the organization and work towards realization of

organizational mission. This statement agrees with the findings of a study by Fatt *et.al* (2010) who concluded that organizational justice must be prospered to ensure that employees are satisfied with higher salary, commitment, higher levels of performance, productivity and retention rates. From the study findings, it is important for management to realize that employees are the most valuable resources of the organization and as such they should be nurtured while ensuring that justice is practiced in handling their matters. There is need to recognize their efforts through involvement, recognition, and fair treatment in making decisions about them. This is according to Williamson and William (2010) who conclude in their study that all dimensions of organizational justice, that distributive, procedural and interactive have an influence on employee engagement.

#### **Employee Work Environment on Employee Engagement**

The results of the findings revealed that there employee work environment has a strong significant positive influence on employee engagement among non-teaching staff members in selected public universities in Kenya with a Pearson correlation coefficient  $r=0.518$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$  which was significant at 5% level of significance.

It also indicated that whenever management considered having sufficient tools and a favourable environment in which employees were to perform, there was increase in employee engagement which was seen through work performance which was done in a shorter time and efficiently. This is in line with Ahmad (2013) who concluded that organizations should strategize their work environment in order to escalate the level of employee obligation, enthusiasm and high productivity. It was also noted that management recognized the need to have well designed jobs that show clarity. This is another aspect of the psychological work environment which was under study. This was shown by the responses given; the respondents agreed that their jobs are well designed. It agrees with the study by Lane *et al*

(2010) who proposes that other aspects of work like autonomy, working hours, organizational structure and communicate affect engagement.

Psychological aspects of work like praise for a job well done, autonomy, chances to acquire new skills and a sense of accomplishment improve engagement. Ramay (2012) concludes that a favourable work environment has a positive outcome on employee engagement.

#### **Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement is crucial if universities are to achieve their set goals. An engaged workforce is that which is attached emotionally to their work and perform beyond what is stipulated in their job descriptions. Majority of respondents agreed that they spoke highly of the organizations and were proud to work for the organization. The study also revealed that the employees felt that working well was important to them and that the organization has a great meaning to them. The work they do has full meaning and purpose. It was also revealed that the employees persisted through challenges and worked towards achieving the organizations set goals. They were equally proud of their work.

From the respondents that were interviewed, it was revealed that there was a training policy to guide staff in making decision on training of staff. However, this policy was on paper and not actively in use. This was a cause for complaints and dissatisfaction as many staff felt left out on these training and development programmes.

It was further revealed that scholarships were available to take staff for further education. There were scholarships both within and outside the country but it was difficult to establish what criteria they used to identify those staff to be trained and when to train. Seminars and workshops were organized regularly to improve skills of workers. This showed that management valued the importance of human resources and therefore training them would make them more marketable, stay in the organization and be engaged.

The responses from the interview revealed that there was a budget for training set aside for those to train. However, this budget was not observed seriously and money was transferred to other use. This means that not all that was budgeted for was used. Safety and security of staff is paramount to ensure they were comfortable to perform. The staff interviewed revealed that there were procedures laid down by management, however, other staff were not aware of these and there was need to sensitize the staff on policies and procedures governing their work performance.

The interview further revealed that resource allocation was done but no laid down procedure was available. It is important to allocate resourced equitably. Lack of a guideline showed that management of public universities had a task to ensure this anomaly did not continue. Some key department like health and science laboratories lacked essential equipment to enable them offer service efficiently.

From the findings of the interview, management ensured that staff had a comfortable working environment by providing proper lighting in offices and ventilation. Office space was available though it was not sufficient in some departments. There were clear job descriptions which gave roles and responsibilities of staff in various cadres. Management solved conflicts by using the laid down procedure for conflict resolution. This ensured that no party was treated unfairly. This was a positive attribute exhibited by the university management because it promoted a harmonious working environment.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the study findings, it was concluded that organizational support influenced employee engagement among non-teaching staff in public universities in Kenya. The universities' management had various policies in place. These policies were however, available on paper but were not followed. An example was the training policy to

guide on who, where and when staff should attend training to improve their skills and knowledge. Some staff therefore felt left out during selection to train and this affected them negatively. It was also established that internal promotions were not done regularly. Staff therefore stayed on same grades for a long time before being considered for promotion. It was also established that the voice of employees was not considered when management held meetings.

From the findings of the study, procedures for decision making did not take into account the feelings of staff at lower levels. It was discovered that resources were not allocated equally. Some staff lacked basic resources to perform work while others had more than enough. There lacked a policy on resource allocation which is a crucial document which was to guide both management and staff in allocating resources. It was also established that outcomes of decisions made were not sincere and polite from the high percentage of respondents who felt they were unfairly treated when management made decisions concerning them.

The study also revealed that there was insufficient supply of tools and equipment for work performance. There was also insufficient office space for staff. It further concludes that conflicts occurred at the work place. There was a positive attribute on management side where respondents agreed that their jobs are well designed and they showed clarity. Staff received support from fellow colleagues whenever they faced challenges at the workplace.

## **Recommendations**

It was concluded that management in public universities had a duty to come up with a training policy to guide on the staff to attend training to improve their skills and knowledge. This policy would guide on who to go for training, the kind of training, when and where. Management of these public universities had a duty to ensure internal promotions were carried out regularly to promote those who merited and reward them for good

performance. There was need to involve staff in decision making through their representatives.

The study recommended that procedures for decision making should take into consideration the voice of employees. This would make employees engaged for better organizational performance. Allocation of resources requires a guideline to ensure equitability. This would make them feel part of the organization and therefore engaged.

The study recommended that staff appraisal be done on regular basis for example annually and feedback given to employees for improvement in work performance. Supervisors have a duty to ensure that the employees are aware of their duties and responsibilities. There is need to share their experiences and challenges with their supervisors and the same relayed to management for decision making.

From the findings of the study, management in public universities has a task of ensuring employees

are provided with adequate supplies of working tools and equipment. This will enable work to be performed efficiently and effectively. Employees should be recognized for excellent performance through acknowledgement, promotion, pay increase and other means to motivate them and engage them.

### **Areas for Further Research**

The researcher suggests further research to be conducted to investigate other factors which influence employee engagement for example, training, enriching jobs and leadership styles. The study recommended other studies to be carried out on influence of employee engagement in private universities in Kenya and generalize the factors that influence employee engagement. Future studies could also include teaching staff in public universities. There is also need to carry out a study on external factors that influence employee engagement for generalization purposes.

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