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Effects of Social Interventions on Employee Performance: A Case of Eldoret Water and Sanitation Company, Kenya

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Abstract

Public sector organizations demonstrate bureaucratic norms and behaviour patterns that are at odds with the principles of organization development that affects employee's performance and morale. The study sought to establish the effect of social interventions on employee performance at Eldoret Water and Sanitation Company. The study employed a case study research design and was guided by systems theory. The study targeted 215 employees and managers working at the ELDOWAS Company. The sample size of 50% of the target population was selected. Stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure that the target population was divided into strata and that each stratum was represented in the sample in a proportion equivalent to its size in the population. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedule. Data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages and presented using frequency tables and bargraphs. The study established that social interventions improved employees' performance greatly. In particular, the study established that recognition awards, holiday trips/visits to other performing organizations, games and sports, regular departmental meetings and common health breaks are bonding and improves employee performance. The study recommends that there is need to provide more funds to recognition awards, holiday trips/visits to other performing organizations, games and sports.

Keywords: Rewards, Employee Performance, Social Interventions, Recognition

Introduction

Considering the role of employees in service organizations, they need to be equipped to carry out their functions successfully. The simultaneity of services leads to an inherent link between employees' behavior, their motivation, competencies, satisfaction, and commitment. Looy, Gemmel and Van Dierdonck (2003) revealed that two thirds of employee satisfaction levels were caused by latitude given to employees by their management (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). An organization is really a complex system that has no physical body of its own, so if an employee is to feel a sense of support, it will result from interactions with other individuals within the

company. When employees feel that they are appreciated and receive rewards for service to their company, their motivation to continue receiving rewards increases, and levels of job performance increase (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002).

Kreitner (2000) states that all workers who donate their time to worthy causes expect to be rewarded on some way for their contributions. These pay offs have immense impact on how long and hard someone works. Individuals who are pleased with the consequences of work are likely to put forth more effort than someone who feels cheated in some way. Human resource managers have therefore found that job performance and satisfaction can be improved by properly administering rewards. Pattanayak (2003) stresses the importance of firms linking their rewards directly to their strategic goals by pegging to the employees contribution towards achieving them. Firms will be able to ensure that their pay systems are integrated firmly into their business. Kaila (2006) reminds us that our knowledge of motivation tells us that people do what they do to satisfy some need. Organizations then use rewards to motivate employees. They certainly rely on rewards to get employees to come to work and perform effectively once they are hired.

Increasing organizational support is generally achieved through better treatment of employees in areas such as fairness, support, rewards, and favorable job conditions, and that extending these gestures seems to be recognized as a sign of high organizational support by the employees who receive them, regardless of the reward or managerial system in place at that organization (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). In other words, whether the company has an organizational hierarchy, team management, positive reinforcement, or negative reinforcement method of management, employees tend to view fairness, support, rewards, and favorable job conditions as signs of organizational support.

In order for an organization to meet its obligations to shareholders, employees and society, its top management must develop a relationship between the organization and employees that will fulfill the continually changing needs of both parties. At a minimum, the organization expects employees to perform reliably the tasks assigned to them and at the standards set for them, and to follow the rules that have been established to govern the workplace. At a minimum, employees expect their organization to provide fair pay, safe working conditions, and fair treatment. Like management, employees often expect more, depending on the strength of their needs for security, status, involvement, challenge, power, and responsibility. There is therefore need for organisations to adopt organization development initiatives geared towards improving employee performance hence productivity. Private sector organizations seem to have registered significant success in getting their employees perform by adopting good organizational interventions. However, Public sector enterprises have been unable to adopt and smoothly implement these initiatives hence poor employee performance and productivity. Eldoret Water and Sanitation Company has been implementing various organizational development interventions through its 2008-2013 strategic plan. During the development of the strategic plan 2008-2013 Eldowas came up with five interventions after a SWOT Analysis of the company. These interventions were: develop capacity to supply water and sewerage services to meet market demand, put in place a responsive customer relations management system, achieve efficiency in billing, revenue collection and debt management, acquire and maintain staff with

competences that fulfill job roles and accommodate growth needs and develop and implement financial management systems that comply with stakeholder's expectations. However, the extent to which these interventions have influenced employee performance at the Eldoret Water and Sanitation is not known. This is why the current study was conducted to establish the effect of social interventions on employee performance in Eldoret Water and Sanitation Company.

Methodology

The study employed a case study research design and was guided by systems theory as used by Katz and Khan (1966). The study targeted 215 employees and managers working at the ELDOWAS Company. The sample size of 50% of the target population was selected. Stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure that the target population was divided into strata and that each stratum was represented in the sample in a proportion equivalent to its size in the population. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedule. Data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages and presented using frequency tables and bar graphs.

Findings

Background Information of the Respondents

This section presents responses on the age of the respondents and the departments where they were working.

Age Distribution of Participants

The study sought to establish the most predominant age bracket for the respondents sampled in the study. Age as a variable was operationalized using age brackets. An examination of the questionnaire responses pertaining to age for each of the 85 participants revealed that majority of the respondents 36.0 percent were aged between 26-35 years. Further, 34.0 percent of the respondent employees were within the age bracket of 18-25 years; 22.0 percent 36-45 years. The study further revealed that only 7.0 percent of the respondent employees were at the age bracket of between 46-55 years. This implies that employees at Eldoret water and Sanitation Company were within the age bracket where they would embrace change in the organization. Age bracket of top management has an influence on the change process. If the management of an organization is in the age bracket where they are almost retiring they may not be in the mood for new things and thus it is very difficult to change the organization. Literature also claims that old managers, who have fully embraced the traditional organization paradigm and are successful, are resistant to change. The results are shown in figure 1.

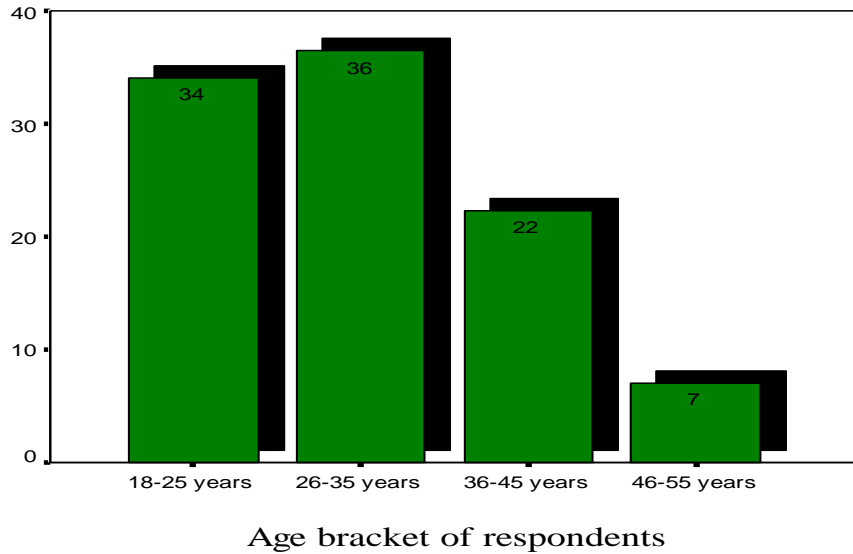


Figure 1: Age bracket of respondents

Departments

The researcher also wanted to find out the department of which the sampled employees at Eldoret water and sanitation company worked under, most of them 31.0% were in the technical staff department, 18.0% were professionals, 15.0% were in department of technicians, 11.0% were in senior management department while 8.0% were in supervisory department. Other departments mentioned included; stores department, finance department, maintenance department, laboratory department and registry department. The results show that Eldoret water and Sanitation Company has several departments which work hand in hand to be able to give quality services to their clients. The results are presented in figure 2.

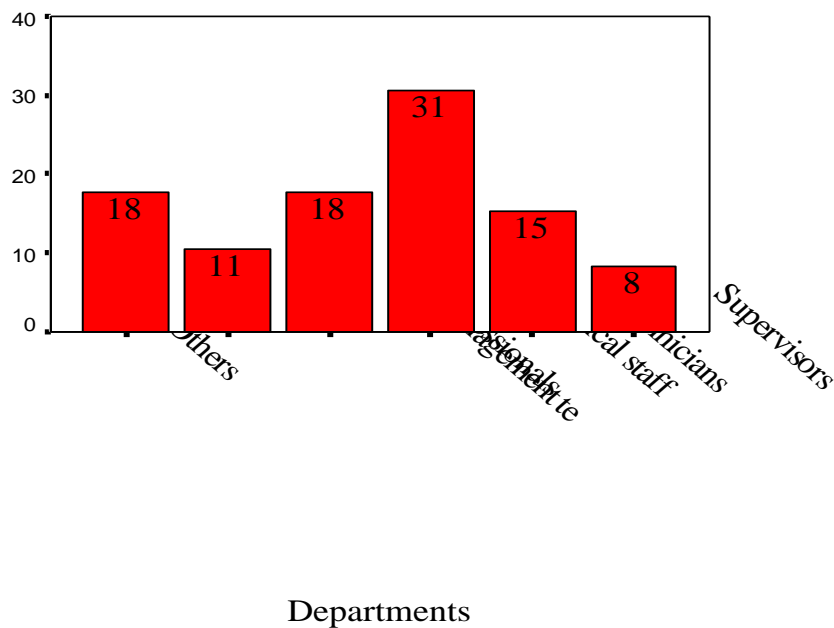


Figure 2: Departments

Effect of Social Interventions on Employee Performance

The study sought to establish the effect of social interventions on employee performance. The responses for each of 85 participating employees who participated in this study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Effect of Social Interventions on Employee Performance

Effect of the strategy	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Employee recognition awards boosts individual employee performance	22(25.9%)	54(63.5%)	4(4.7%)	5(5.9%)	-	85(100%)
Holiday Trips/visits to other performing Organizations motivate employees to put more effort to their work	18(21.2%)	46(54.1%)	17(20.0%)	4(4.7%)	-	85(100%)
Games and sports are bonding sessions that lead to good employee performance at workplace	23(27.0%)	54(63.5%)	7(8.2%)	1(1.2%)		85(100%)
Regular departmental meetings help re-engineers employees effort to perform better	20(23.5%)	61(71.8%)	4(4.7%)			85(100%)
Common Health breaks are bonding opportunities between management and employees hence improving performance	10(11.8%)	38(44.7%)	4(4.7%)	28(32.9%)	5(5.9%)	85(100%)

As shown in Table 1, employees shared a common view regarding the various effects of social interventions practiced in Eldoret water and Sanitation Company. Majority of the respondent

employees 63.5 percent agreed that employee recognition awards boosts individual employee performance while 25.9 percent strongly agreed. Only 4.7 percent of the respondents were undecided. This is in line with Wood (2009) who believed that an important value of organizational development is recognition. He observed that emotions, personal values and interpersonal relationships are a critical part of an organization's success and therefore recognizing it was an essential value organizational development.

Concerning whether holiday trips/visits to other performing organizations motivate employees to put more effort to their work, 54.1 percent of the respondent employees agreed, 21.2 percent strongly agreed, 20.0 percent were undecided while 4.7 percent disagreed. Regarding whether games and sports are bonding sessions that lead to good employee performance at workplace, majority of the respondents 63.5 percent agreed, 27.0 percent strongly agreed, 8.2 percent were undecided. Only 1.2 percent of the respondent employees disagreed that games and sports were a bonding sessions that lead to good employee performance at workplace.

The findings further indicated that regular departmental meetings help re-engineer employees effort to perform better. Majority of the respondents 71.8 percent agreed while 23.5 strongly agreed. Only 4.7 percent of the respondent employees were undecided. Regarding whether the common health breaks are bonding opportunities between management and employees hence improving performance, 44.7 percent of the respondents agreed, 11.8 percent strongly agreed, 4.7 percent were undecided while 32.9 percent disagreed.

An analysis of heads of departments' interview schedule revealed that social strategies were being implemented and that there was a positive relationship between social strategies and employee performance. The interview further revealed that the organization considers employee involvement in organizational development intervention a powerful tool and thus few of the employees were involved in decision-making concerning interventions to be implemented and therefore most of the employees did not have a say on the kind of intervention to be implemented.

Discussion of Findings

The study established that employee recognition awards boosts individual employee performance. This can be attributed to the fact that recognition systems are an essential tool to integrate individual efforts with strategic business objectives by encouraging employees to do the right things (Schuler and MacMillan, 2006). To achieve these, managers must understand the psychology of praising others for their good work, to apply the principles of employee recognition himself and to encourage others to initiate it in their working relationships. In other words, recognition systems are a powerful means of focusing attention within an organization (Saleemi, 2011).

Conclusion

Regarding the effect of social interventions on employee performance, the study established that social interventions improved employees' performance greatly. In particular, the study established that recognition awards, holiday trips/visits to other performing organizations,

games and sports, regular departmental meetings and common health breaks are bonding and improves employee performance.

Recommendations

Since social interventions are critical to improvement of employee performance, there is need to provide more funds to recognition awards, holiday trips/visits to other performing organizations, games and sports.

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