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Mande Wycliffe Odhiambo, Hazel G. Gachoka, Charles M. Rambo

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Relationship between Gender Diversity and Employee Performance of Public Universities in Western Kenya

Mande Wycliffe Odhiambo

Department of Entrepreneurship and Technology, Leadership and Management, School of Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Procurement, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Nairobi, Kenya
Email: cliffmande@yahoo.com

Professor Hazel G. Gachoka

Department of Entrepreneurship and Technology, Leadership and Management, School of Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Procurement, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Nairobi, Kenya
Email: hazelgac@gmail.com

Professor Charles M. Rambo

School of Continuing and Distance Education, University of Nairobi, Kenya.
Email: rambocharles@yahoo.com

Abstract

The objective of this study was to establish relationship between gender diversity and employee performance of public universities in Western Kenya. The target population composed of four public universities and the respondents were 120 head of departments. The study adopted a mixed method design and a survey method was used to collect primary data using a questionnaire pretested for validity and reliability. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Out of the 120 questionnaires sent out, 93 questionnaires were received giving a response rate of 78%. Regression and correlation analysis established a statistically significant positive relationship between gender diversity and employee performance. The conclusions drawn from the study findings is that gender diversity influence employee performance positively and majority of the employees are positive about gender diversity practices in public universities. The study then recommended that, these institutions should strive to increase representation of female employees in leadership positions in teams not just as a fulfillment of affirmative policies but as positive gender diversity practice. Further research should be carried out on other variables of workforce diversity, test moderating

variable on this relationship and a look into other institutions in public and private sectors.

Keywords: *Workforce Diversity, Gender Diversity, Employee Performance, Public Universities, Western Kenya.*

INTRODUCTION

Workforce Diversity

Increased mobility and networking of people from diverse backgrounds as a result of improved economic and political systems and the recognition of human rights by most nations has put most organizations under pressure to embrace diversity at the work place (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). This diversity brings with it the heterogeneity that needs to be nurtured, cultivated and appreciated as a means of increasing organization's performance. Carrell (2006) defines workforce diversity as ways that people differ which can affect a task or relationship within an organization such as age, gender, race, education and ethnicity. The concept of diversity emerged mainly to further the availability of equal opportunities in the workplace with a philosophy of ensuring that organizations make the most out of the difference from a diverse workforce rather than losing talent which might assist the organization to be more efficient and effective (Jain & Verma, 1996).

Contemporary trends in the legal framework have also necessitated the putting in place specific statutes making it unlawful to discriminate on grounds such as age, sex, marital status, race, national origin, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, union membership or non-membership, part-time or full time workers, or ex-offenders whose convictions are spent (Torrington, Hall & Taylor, 2005). Cox (2001) agrees with this but argues that workforce diversity is not the sole domain of the human resource function in the organization primarily aimed at compliance with legal requirements; but it is a systematic organization-wide effort based on the premise that for organizations to survive and thrive there must be an inherent value in diversity. Cox notes that, the challenge of diversity is not simply to have it but to create conditions in which its potential to be a performance barrier is minimized and its potential to enhance performance is maximized (Cox, 2001). Diversity management therefore refers not only to those groups that have been discriminated against or that are different from the dominant or privileged groups, but to the mixture of differences, similarities and tensions that can exist among the elements of a pluralistic mixture (Thomas, 2005).

Workforce diversity is a subjective phenomenon, created by group members themselves who on the basis of their different social identities categorize others as similar or dissimilar (O'Reilly, Williams, & Barsade, 1998). Loden & Rosener (1991) define diversity as that which differentiates one group of people from another along primary and secondary dimensions. Primary dimensions of diversity, those exerting primary influences on our identities, are gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age and mental or physical abilities and characteristics. They claim that primary dimensions shape our basic self-image as well as our fundamental world views and have the most impact on groups in the workplace and society. Secondary dimensions of diversity on the other hand are less visible, exert a more variable influence on personal identity and add a more subtle richness to the primary dimensions of diversity. They include: educational background, geographic location, religion, first language, family status, work style, work experience, military experience, organizational role and level, income and communication style. The secondary dimensions impact our self-esteem and self-definition (Loden & Rosener, 1991).

Gender Diversity

Powell (2011) defined gender as the physiological inference of a someone being either male or female, like expectations and beliefs regarding what kind of attitudes, behaviors, values, knowledge, skills, and interests areas are more suitable for or typical of one sex than the other. The study of gender diversity focuses on how individuals believe that males and females differ. These gender variations influence the manner in which individuals react to the behaviors of others in the work settings or any other group coalition. Gender diversities are visible in prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination.

In the last decades, those organizational barriers that hinder women from advancing to the top in their career have been a vital area in organizational research. Singh & Vinnicombe (2004) in their study discovered that women are almost if not completely absent when it comes to occupying senior positions in organizations. However, male directors often form an elite group at the top of the corporate world and only very few women are able to breakthrough these glass ceiling into this elite group, despite making inroads into middle management. This point out that gender in the board of directors in some big organization is a barrier for career advancement. Singh & Vinnicombe (2004) argued that this is a matter of concern, because the talents of women are not being fully utilized. One of the most prevailing metaphors used to describe women's absence in senior organizational positions has been that of the 'glass ceiling'. Mavin (2016) citing Morrison & Von Glinow (1990) said the phrase 'Glass ceiling' was made up in the 1960s. This is used to describe a subtle obstacle that is so clear but yet very powerful that it can hinder women from claiming up the managerial ladder. Glass ceiling was coined to describe those organizational practices and processes which creates difficulties and limitations in which women encounter when trying to attain the highest position of their particular field. Here, women may be unable to reach the top of the management hierarchy even though they can see it (Gatrell & Swan, 2008).

Employee Performance

Durga (2017) defined performance as the act of executing a task or an accomplishment or achievement. He adds that employee performance is how well an employee is effectively fulfilling his/ her job requirement or discharging his/ her duties so as to achieve good results. O'Flynn, et al. (2001) citing William and O'Reilly (1998) said employee performance is defined using three criteria. First criteria, is that employees' output meets the standard of performance set by the organization's external customers. Secondly, employee performance can be defined in terms of how the social processes utilized in the performance of their jobs enhances or maintain the capability of the employees to work together on subsequent group tasks. Finally, that employee's personal needs are satisfied instead of them being frustrated by the group performance. O'Flynn, et al. (2001) citing Ancona (1992) argue that there are multiple dimensions when it comes to rating of performance seeing that different constituents have their different performance criteria and access to data. For instance, management may be more interested in looking at the output of the employees whereas; the employees make be interested in creating a productive environment for themselves. Information and decision making theory predict that a positive outcome exist between employee performance in intellectual and complex tasks and information as employees have diverse

knowledge, skills, experience and expertise which results in innovation, new product design and improved decision making.

Public Universities in Kenya

Public universities in Kenya are charged with the responsibility of providing higher education to all in the country on a competitive yet balanced basis accounting for 80% of the total university students' enrolment in the country. The universities were previously established under individual Acts of Parliament until the enactment of Universities Act No. 42 of 2012 which saw all individual Acts repealed and public universities re-accredited through charter award after institutional quality audits. All public universities in Kenya operate under the oversight of Commission for University Education (CUE) to which they are accredited a move aimed at promoting, regulating, monitoring and dealing with all matters related to university education. Currently there are 22 fully accredited public universities and 9 constituent colleges (CUE, 2013). The public universities are in different geographical locations in the country and are autonomous in matters of management of their human resources. All public universities major funding is by the government and their core activities is teaching, research and consultancy services. Being public establishments, public universities are also affected by legislations and government directives that are deemed to be of national interest and best human resource practices (Nguata, 2013). This forms a ground for investigating the relationship between age diversity and employee performance of these establishments and how this is moderated by the organization culture of each individual institution.

Statement of the Problem

The world's increasing globalization needs more interaction between people from diverse cultures, thinking, and backgrounds than in the past (Green et al., 2002). Considering that the world economy is now globalized and more culturally diverse, these multicultural work forces are making work environment different from traditional one (Mazur, 2010). Thomas (1990) pointed out that corporate competence counts more than ever, and today's nonhierarchical, flexible, collaborative management requires an increase in tolerance for individuality. The question is not, therefore, one of accepting that individuals are different but creating an atmosphere of inclusion and making a commitment to valuing diversity. Research suggests that managers should actively manage and value workforce diversity because if designed and implemented properly, effective diversity management practices can support key organizational development initiatives (Storey, 1999).

In Kenya vision 2030- a new development blueprint which aims to transform Kenya into a middle-income country, intends to create a globally competitive and adaptive human resource base that will meet the requirement of the country (Government of Kenya, 2007). Its potential lies in the people's creativity, work ethics, education, and entrepreneurial skills based on human resource practices of well qualified and flexible personnel for effective competition in the global economy. This can only be achieved through effective management of public universities as the main source of future labour force because they account for 80 percent of the total students' enrollment in higher institutions of learning (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Despite government legislations that have been put in place to ensure workforce diversity in public establishments, questions have been raised regarding workforce diversity in public universities in Kenya. In a report released by the National

Cohesion and Integration Commission (2012), it indicated that most of the public universities in Kenya still have major issues relating to age, ethnic, regional, educational and racial inclusion. There is therefore need for these institutions to rapidly adopt workforce diversity management practices in the context of their organization culture to achieve this objective.

Several studies have been conducted on the benefits of diversity to organizations. In a research on Workforce Diversity Management and Employee Performance in the Banking Sector in Kenya by Munjuri & Maina (2013), it was found out that cultural diversity management seems more sensitive in the Bank and served a pivotal role. It encourages better employee retention, increased productivity, better morale, an expanded market share and improved customer service while a study by Kundu (2001) in his research on Managing Cross Cultural Diversity concluded that organizations with high levels of well managed diversity are effective in steering corporate cultures that have new perspectives, pioneering capabilities and fresh ideas necessary to survive. Another study by Jerono (2012) on Women Participation in University leadership, showed that women involvement in leadership was below one-third of the constitutional requirement and was only concentrated in the lower hierarchy of university leadership. However, despite several studies that have been conducted on workplace diversity, there still exists a gap in determining the relationship between gender diversity and employee performance in public universities in Western Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Workforce diversity is a very broad field which arguably, has been generalized across many boundaries. That is, management research, functional categories, social categories and psychological research. Diversity theorists have recently turned to the well-established field of social psychology for insights into how diversity affects individuals and groups in organizations. Social psychologists have examined the processes involved with social identity and intergroup relations and diversity scholars recognized that this research tradition can provide a solid background for emerging theories on workplace diversity. Organizational researchers often refer to inborn human characteristics as dimensions of diversity, or social category diversity. The theoretical foundations for primary dimensions of diversity include the self-categorization theory (Turner, 1982), the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), the similarity paradigm theory (Thatcher, 1999), and the racial identity theory (Jehn, 1999). These theories describe how people react to observable demographic characteristics. The primary dimensions of diversity shape people's perception and behavior without regard to work-task relevance. According to O'Flynn, Ricciotti, Nicholas, Lau, Sammaritino, & Fisher (2001) the three most commonly used theories of diversity are the social categorization theory, the similarity attraction paradigm and the informational diversity and decision making perspective.

Empirical Review

Gender Diversity and Employee Performance

Alicia & Thomas (2016) study on the impact of gender diversity on the research quality of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom argues that despite previous studies indicating substantially lower publishing productivity among female researchers, their study postulates the existence of a positive impact of gender diversity on institutional research quality due to possible

synergy effects. Multiple panel regressions was performed and found out that when not controlling for other factors, gender diversity seems to have a negative impact on research quality. When relevant control variables – namely an institution’s size, its research emphasis, faculty age, and faculty maturity – are introduced, this effect disappears. Further, no difference in the effect of gender diversity was found across scientific disciplines.

Abdel (2012) study explores the impact of gender, age, and education background on employee performance in the Egyptian Pharmaceutical industry which is renowned to employ highly diversified workforce. The study sample was 300 middle level management positions. Data was collected via self-administered questionnaires methodology. The results indicated that only two variables, gender and education background, were significant in explaining the variance in employee performance when different work force work together, while age diversity does not.

Ngao & Mwangi (2013) research to explore the effects of managing gender diversity to enhance organizational performance, used descriptive research design and data was collected from sixty employees of the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) which is a profit making public institution in Kenya. Theoretical model and hypothesis in this study were tested using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The results indicated that gender, age and marital status greatly impact on organization performance and success. In addition the study recommended that KPA should recruit a more diverse workforce as it will result to improved synergy in decision making, better understanding of customer’s needs, and increased flexibility in staffing. The study then concludes that this should however be reinforced through well formulated human resource policies and practices.

Kwang and Shery (2017) study analyzes the effects of gender diversity in management on organizational performance using Korea Workplace Panel Survey data for 2005, 2007, and 2009. Few studies have examined this relationship for firms outside the United States, particularly in Asian countries. Similar to previous research, the findings show that gender diversity in management has a U-shaped relationship with firm productivity. Second, the curvilinear relationship between gender diversity in management and firm productivity is stronger in service-oriented industries relative to manufacturing industries, with the highest level of employee productivity within homogeneous management groups. Third, the study includes a measure of workplace family-friendly policies to moderate the relationship between gender diversity in management and organizational performance. The study found that the U-shaped pattern also holds in firms with a large number of family-friendly policies. This suggests that gender diversity in management has considerable influence on the productivity of Korean firms through interactions with family-friendly policies.

Yukiko (2015) research presents empirical evidence testing whether increasing gender diversity is associated with improved firm performance for Japanese listed companies, which have different cultural backgrounds from Western companies, after controlling for size and firm age. As Worthley et al. (2009) points out, the growing importance of the Japanese female workforce under global competition requires a better understanding of gender-related issues in organizational management which is undergoing a transformation from their rooted traditional managerial habits, such as seniority-based promotion, lifetime employment, paternalism, or prioritizing corporate harmony, which favor men. The study found statistically significant positive relationships between managerial gender diversity and one measure of firm performance. Similar to Siegel and Kodama (2011), the study found out that manufacturing firms benefit significantly and sensitively to a greater extent from

increasing managerial gender diversity as compared to those in the service industries, and moreover the curvature of this relationship is significantly greater for manufacturers. Furthermore, firms that demand fewer hours of overtime by their employees also experience this performance boost with increases in management gender diversity, with the same concave shape, and the more over time is reduced the more pronounced is the effect.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is defined as a collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Mac Naughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford (2001) provide a definition of paradigm, which includes three elements: a belief about the nature of knowledge, a methodology and criteria for validity. A number of theoretical paradigms are used in research such as: positivist (and post positivist), constructivist, interpretivist, transformative, emancipatory, critical, pragmatism and deconstructivist.

A research paradigm is important because it directs research efforts, serves to reassert itself to the exclusion of other paradigms and articulates the theories (Kuhn, 1962). Thus, from the objective and measurable reality of positivism via the contextualized causal understanding of realism to the subjective plurality of interpretivism, paradigms could be interpreted as prescriptive and as requiring particular research methods (Greene et al., 2001). The choice of social sciences research paradigm is a reflection of researchers' epistemological understanding of the world and the interpretation of any research findings will expose the researchers' underlying philosophies and extend the notion that all knowledge is knowledge from some point of view (Fishman, 1978).

The two main research paradigms are positivism and subjectivism and one of Dewey's (1925) contentions is that the main research paradigms of positivism and subjectivism derive from the same paradigm family, that they seek to find "the truth" —whether it is an objective truth or the relative truth of multiple realities (Dewey, 1925). According to Rorty (1999) pragmatism, when regarded as an alternative paradigm, sidesteps the contentious issues of truth and reality, accepts philosophically, that there are singular and multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry and orients itself toward solving practical problems in the 'real world'. Pragmatism also allows the researcher to be free of mental and practical constraints imposed by the forced choice dichotomy between post positivism and constructivism (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The current study used both qualitative and quantitative and will be guided by pragmatic research philosophy. The pragmatic paradigm places research problem as central and applies all approaches to understanding the problem (Creswell, 2003). At the level of translating epistemological concerns into research methodology and finally the decision of research methods, a pragmatic paradigm using mixed methods research offers a solution by using quantitative methods to measure some aspects of the phenomenon in question and qualitative methods for others. With the objective and hypotheses testing in the current study the paradigm provided insights into the research design to be used in the study.

Research Design

The study used mixed method design which includes the use of more than one method of data collection in a research study, mixing qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Using triangulation or greater validity, quantitative and qualitative data will be converged in order for the findings to be mutually corroborated (Greene, 2007). Mixed method design was appropriate for this study because it allowed collection of information for independent and dependent variables using open and closed ended questions. Qualitative approaches enables collection of data in form of words rather than numbers. It provides verbal descriptions rather than numerical (Kothari, 2009). According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), qualitative methods can be used to gain more in depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively. Quantitative approach on the other hand strives for precision by focusing on items that can be counted into predetermined categories and subjected to statistical analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The use of these two approaches will reinforce each other because data collected using the main questionnaire will be quantitative and will be analyzed using statistical methods. Qualitative approach on the other hand will involve interpretation of phenomena without depending on numerical measurements or statistical methods. This design was used by West (2011), Yauch and Steudel (2003) among other researchers and it enabled them answer research questions, test hypotheses and draw plausible conclusions.

Target Population

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) assert that, the target population is the population to which a researcher wants to generalize the results of the study. The target population of this study was the public universities in Kenya. The sample consisted of four public universities namely: Maseno University, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology and Kisii University. The respondents were 120 head of departments working in these universities. The head of departments were selected because they are the apex of decision making in the respective departments, from the four respective universities.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

A sample size is the number of subjects that should be studied and from which reliable inferences can be made about a population. The sample frame for this study included head of departments in administrative, teaching and non-teaching staff of all fully accredited public universities by 2014 in Western Kenya region. The study targeted all 120 head of departments from the respective universities who gave information that best answered the research questions. Sampling is the process of selecting few cases from a target population in order to provide information that can be used to make judgments about a much larger number of cases (Kothari, 2004). A census of all the head of departments from the four universities in Western Kenya was adopted. A census enables a complete enumeration of all items in the population (Oso & Onen, 2006). According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) this is an attempt to collect data from every member of the population being studied rather than choosing a section.

Pilot Testing of the Instrument

Pilot study is defined as a small-scale test of the methods and procedures to be used on a large scale (Porta, 2008). The Researcher carried out the pilot testing of the questionnaire for validity and reliability on a small and similar group to the one that was used in the research in Maseno University. The process of pilot testing used convenience sampling where members of the population were

chosen based on their relative ease of access (Lucas, 2014) and respondents who volunteer give an advantage of time and large proportion of the population can be used (Wiederman, 1999). A sample size of twelve (12) participants was used in the pilot study which is 10% of the sample size of 120 respondents for the actual study. Baker (1994) found out that a sample size of 10% of the sample size for the actual study is a reasonable number of participants to consider enrolling in a pilot study. Pretesting the questionnaire was important because: ambiguous and vague questions were revealed as respondents interpreted them differently; comments and suggestions made by the respondents were used to improve the questionnaire; deficiencies in questionnaire were revealed and in pilot study researcher analyzed the questionnaires to see if the methods of analysis were appropriate. Fink and Kosekoff (1985) suggested that when pilot-testing the questionnaire look out for failure to answer questions, respondents giving several answers to the same question and written comments; these maybe indicators that the instrument is unreliable and needs revision. The questionnaire which incorporated all the suggestions observed was again pre-tested by the researcher on another similar group to confirm its validity and reliability. The researcher accepted the instrument as suitable for the research once it met the set conditions.

Validity of the Instruments

Construct validity is the degree to which a test measures what it claims, or purports, to be measuring. Content validity on the other hand refers to the extent to which a measure represents all facets of a given subject area. Validity therefore refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the variables under investigation (Wilson, Pan and Schumsky, 2012). In ensuring validity of the instruments, an analysis was done on the study variables and linked them on the test construct by a group of knowledgeable and experienced researchers. Appropriateness of the questions was tested by content validity ratios(CVR) by the subject matter expert raters (SMEs) and the mean CVR across items was used as an indicator of overall test content validity (Lawshe, 1975).

Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability is the degree to which a measurement technique can be depended upon to secure consistent results upon repeated application. Reliability can be internal or external. Internal reliability is the extent to which data collection, analysis and interpretation are consistent. If multiple data collectors are used, they should agree. External reliability is the extent to which the results can be replicated. The internal consistency method provides a unique estimate of reliability for the given test administration. There are four common ways of estimating reliability: the test - retest method, the parallel (equivalent) - form technique, the split - half method and the internal consistency. The researcher used the split-half reliability test and calculated the reliability of the questionnaire using the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. The most popular internal consistency reliability estimate is given by Cronbach's alpha which is usually interpreted as the mean of all possible split-half coefficients (Willmott & Nuttall, 1975). Using the correlation matrix alpha the following equation is used; $\alpha = \frac{NP}{1+P(N+1)}$

Where **N** equals the number of items and **p** equals the mean interim correlation.

The instrument testing reliability used different numbers of scale items in each variable. The study tested reliability of age diversity (independent), employee performance (dependent) and organization culture (moderating) variables. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above was considered high enough to judge the instrument as reliable. A high Cronbach's alpha coefficient implied that the items correlated highly among themselves, that is, there was consistency among the items in measuring the concept of interest (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003). A test-re-test coefficient of 0.904 was achieved and considered desirable. This is consistent with the proposition of Mugenda (2010) that, the higher the test-re-test coefficient, the better the test-re-test reliability, hence the stability of the measure across time.

Data Processing and Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted according to the research objectives and hypotheses. This included the need to establish the relationship between age diversity and employee performance of public universities in the Western region of Kenya. Before processing the responses, data preparation was done on the completed questionnaires by editing, coding, entering and cleaning the data. Data collected was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the survey data and provide immediate summary statistics for the various objectives. These included measures of central tendency and measures of relationships. In particular, Regression Analysis was used to investigate the relationship(s) that had been hypothesized amongst the variables of study. As espoused by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) correlation technique was used to analyze the degree of relationship between the variables. Content analysis was also conducted on the data that are of qualitative nature. In conventional terms, content analysis involves description and discussion of the data. Results were presented in tables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response Rate

A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to the head of sections/department of the target population. The population consisted of four public universities namely: Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Maseno University, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology and Kisii University. Those respondents who filled and returned usable questionnaires were 93 making a response rate of 78%. The 22% of the respondents failed to fill the questionnaires even after several follow up or filled them badly making them unusable. This response rate was in line with previous researches. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting; a rate of 60% is good and a response rate of 70% and over is excellent. This meant that the response rate of 78% was excellent and therefore enough for the study to proceed to the data analysis, presentation, interpretation and discussion.

Bio Data

The study was interested in the background information of the respondents in the areas of the position held by the responded in the organization, age, highest level of education and length of service of the responded with the organization in order to determine whether the respondents were capable of interpreting the information in relation to its implication on employee performance in

public universities in Western Kenya.

Distribution of Respondents by Age

The study sought to determine the age distribution of the respondents in order to gauge their work experience, loss of skills due to retirement, institutional memory and employee succession. The rate of loss or retention of these factors has an impact on employee performance in public universities. High percentage of young people means the organization lacks experienced people but is well endowed with energetic people to drive the company forward. High percentage of old staffs mean that the organization lacks energetic staff to drive its mission and also the organization will lose experienced people at once which may lead to lose of many experienced people and institutional memory. The study found out that 28(30.1%) of the respondents were aged above 55 years, 23(24.7%) were aged between 49 to 53 years, 17(18.3%) were aged between 43 to 48 years, 17(18.3%) were aged between 37 to 42 years, 8(8.6%) were aged between 31 to 36 years and none of the respondents was below 30 years. The population of head of departments was well distributed and all age groups were adequately represented. According to Winnie (2008), youngsters who are their learning stage are more willing to learn new things and accept new ideas. Older people who have more life experiences are more mature and possess better problem solving skills. As an addition, the researcher also stated that the values possessed by different age groups can complement each other in companies and this tends to achieve better firm performance.

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

The study sought to determine the gender distribution of the respondents and found out that 67(72%) were male while 26(28%) were female. This study therefore reveals that despite majority of the head of departments in public universities being of male gender the female gender constitute 28%. This is approximately one third of all the head of departments and hence meeting the threshold of the legal requirements. Moreover, this representation is adequate to bring in diversity and therefore answer the research question on gender diversity and employee performance in public university. According to Emiki & Eunmi (2009), significant amount of workforce diversity remains ineffective if gender issues are not first recognized and managed. The research and study also state that the most constitutional challenge is overcoming the thought that woman are not equal to man.

Distribution of Respondents by Highest Level of Education

The study also sought to determine the educational level of the respondents. The results show that 55(59.1%) are PhD holders, 21(22.6%) have Master's degree, 8(8.6%) have Bachelor's degree, 7(7.5%) are diploma holders and 2(2.2%) have other qualifications like higher diploma and post graduate certificate. The education level of the respondents was ideal because the respondents could read, interpret and answer questionnaires appropriately. The study indicated that majority of the respondents had a PhD degree based on the fact that the study was carried out in institutions of higher learning and the target respondents were head of departments in these organizations. Cagle (1988) has regarded experience and education as factor that determine the leadership style and employee performance. Katozai (2005) argued that knowledge is a chief weapon that makes a person effective as a leader and therefore a leader should be educated, experienced and qualified. Nsubuga

(2009) concluded that unless principals are well equipped with knowledge and skills in management and leadership, they would not be effective. This implies that for the public universities under study the head of departments are well educated and could steer employee performance in these organizations.

Distribution of Respondents by Length of Service with the Organization

The study sought to establish for how long the respondents have been working with the same organisation in order to gauge the level of skills acquired, work experience in the company and the institutional memory stored; The results show that 28(30.1%) of the respondents had worked for the organisation for more than 15 years, 39(41.9%) had worked for their organization for 10 to 14 years, 17(18.2%) had worked for 5 to 9 years, and 9(9.6%) had worked for less than 5 years. The study show that out of the 93(100%) respondents, majority of the respondents 39(41.9%) had worked for the organizations for between 10 and 14 years which shows experienced employees with good understanding of the organizations' vision, mission, values and culture. According to Boxall (1998) the fundamental priority of HR strategy in a firm is to secure and maintain the kind of human resources that are necessary for the firm's viability. The labor turnover interferes with total employees' experience and working relationships built over the period of time.

Gender Diversity and Employee Performance of Public Universities

The objective and null hypothesis the study was to achieve were; to establish relationship between gender diversity and employee performance of public universities in Western Kenya, and H_{02} : There is no statistically significant relationship between gender diversity and employee performance of public universities in Western Kenya. The study used both the primary and the secondary data and the descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data and interpretations made from them. Regression analysis, correlation analysis and hypothesis testing were used to establish the relationship between gender diversity and employee performance in public universities in Western Kenya. The results are presented in sub- thematic areas.

Descriptive Statistics

The study examined Gender Diversity indicators which were, gender equality, gender consideration in hiring and gender ratios in leadership, in relation to how they influenced the employee performance of public universities in Western Kenya.

The research results are shown in Table 4.1 using a Likert scale of 1-5 where 5= Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2= Disagree; 1 = strongly disagree, M= Mean, SD= standard deviation and % = Percentage of Respondents.

Table 4.1 Gender Diversity

S/N	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	
a)	Gender diverse team performs better than gender homogeneous team	%	2.2	6.5	12.9	55.9	22.6	3.90	0.90
b)	Diversity training programs meet needs of both gender	%	2.2	5.4	12.9	59.1	20.4	3.90	0.86
c)	My organization put an extra effort in hiring of female	%	4.3	4.3	19.4	45.2	26.9	3.86	1.00
d)	Opportunities for growth and promotion exist for female gender	%	2.2	2.2	6.5	58.1	31.2	4.14	0.87
e)	Gender diversity is an asset for cooperate image	%	2.2	25.8	34.4	24.8	12.8	4.05	0.91
f)	Gender diverse teams includes female in their leadership	%	2.2	8.6	12.9	57.1	19.4	3.82	0.92
g)	I am positive about gender diversity in my work place	%	2.2	7.5	19.4	34.4	36.6	3.96	1.03
Overall Mean							3.95	0.93	

From table 4.1, results from gender diversity show that 55.9% of the respondents agreed that gender diverse groups have better performance than gender homogeneous groups in their organizations. Moreover 22.6% strongly agreed with this statement, with 2.2 % strongly disagreeing. The mean Likert item was 3.90 indicating that to a large extent gender diverse teams perform better than gender homogeneous teams among employees in public universities. The standard deviation was 0.90 showing that individual responses deviated from the mean by a moderate convergence on this statement. The results corroborates with Wentling and Palma Rivas (2000) study which states that organization with diverse workforce will provide superior services because they can understand customers better (Kundu, 2003).

In addition 59.1% agreed diversity training programs meets the needs of both male and female employees, and 22.6% strongly agreeing with the respective statement. The results shows that cumulatively 7.6% disagreed with this statement. A mean of 3.90 indicating that to a large extent diversity training programs meet the need of male and female employees in public universities. The standard deviation of 0.86 showing a moderate convergence of the responses. The results are in agreement with Keil (2007), who noted that diverse training was impactful to employees on improving their performance efficiency and teaching them how to deal with different people well. In addition, Paluck (2006) findings show that diversity training may entail issues for instance laws that encourage equal chances, gender mainstreaming among others.

The study also looked at the concept of gender consideration on hiring and on the item of the level of extra effort put by the organization in hiring female employees the results show that 45.2% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 26.9% strongly agreed. 19.4% of the respondents were neutral and 4.3% disagreed with 4.3% also strongly disagreeing. The mean was 3.86 showing that to a large extent public universities put an extra effort in hiring of female employees. A standard deviation of 1.00 indicating a less convergence of the individual responses. The results agree with Thomas (2002) study which found out that providing an equal job opportunity to women is vital to

improve performance of employees in an organization. The study further argues that discrimination on hiring workers based on gender has resulted in a firms hiring workers who are paid higher wages than alternative workers, but are no more productive.

On the same concept respondents were to give their opinion on opportunities for growth and promotion and 58.1% agreed and 31.2% strongly agreeing. 6.5% of the respondents were neutral while 2.2% disagreed and 2.2% strongly disagreeing with the statement. A mean of 4.14 was realized indicating to a large extent public universities give opportunity for growth and promotion to female employees. A standard deviation of 0.87 was realized showing moderate convergence of the responses. The results are in agreement with Kochan et al., (2002) study which proposes that providing an equal opportunity to women is vital to improve performance of employees in an organization. However, the results are in contrast with Abbas and Hameed (2010) study which found out that women do not have an upper hand when it comes to hiring compared with men.

The last indicator of the research was on ratio in leadership and respondents were to give their opinion on inclusion of female employees in leadership of gender diverse teams, where 57.1% of the respondents agreed and 19.4% strongly agreed with the statement. 12.9% were neutral while 8.6% disagreed with 2.2% strongly disagreed. A mean of 3.82 indicating that to a large extent female employees are included in leadership of gender diverse teams in public universities. The results agrees with research from Joshi and Jackson (2003) who found a positive relationship between team gender diversity and intra-team cooperation, but only within regions that were relatively diverse in terms of gender.

The next statement was on gender diversity as an asset for cooperate image, results show that 24.8% agreed and 12.8% strongly agreed. On the other hand 34.4% of the respondents were neutral while 25.8% disagreed and 2.2% strongly disagreed. The mean was 4.05 revealing that to a large extent the concept of gender diversity is an asset for cooperate image in public universities. A standard deviation of 0.91 was realized indicating a moderate convergence of individual responses. The results relates to Konrad & Hartman, (2001) who found out that a greater organizational emphasis on gender diversity management programs have a positive effect on organizational attractiveness among women, as women are the intended beneficiaries of the programs and that perceptions of organization's attractiveness are important, as they impact on valued organizational outcomes such as competitiveness in the labor market (Ryness & Barber, 1990).

Finally, 36.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that they are positive about gender diversity at their work place and 34.4% agreed on the same statement. 19.4% were neutral while cumulatively 9.7% disagreed. A mean of 3.96 indicated that to a large extent employees in public universities are positive about gender diversity at their work place. The standard deviation was 1.03 showing a less convergence of the responses. The results are in agreement with Egan (2005) findings which indicate that gender diversity enhances employees' overall creativity and innovation because of the combination of different skills, perspectives and backgrounds. In addition a gender-diverse workforce

can produce high quality decisions because men and women bring different perspectives leading to varied alternatives (Rogelberge & Rumery, 1996).

Regression Analysis

Table 4.2 Regression between Gender Diversity and Employee Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	8.070	2.615	3.086	.003	2.876	13.264		
Gender Diversity	.367	.081	4.520	.000	.205	.528	1.000	1.000

The regression model was as follows;

$$Y = 8.070 + 0.367 X + 2.696$$

A regression analysis was carried out and the findings show that there is a significant positive association between gender diversity and employee performance. If gender diversity increases by one unit, employee performance increases by 0.367 units. The results are in agreement with Frink et al., (2003) who conducted two organizational level empirical studies to examine the relationship between women's representation and performance, measuring performance differently in each study. The overall results support this study argument that an organization's performance would increase when gender diversity is maximized.

Correlation Analysis

Table 4.3 Correlation between Gender Diversity and Employee Performance

		Gender Diversity	Employee Performance
Gender Diversity	Pearson Correlation	1	.428**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	93	93
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	.428**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	93	93

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The objective of the study was to establish relationship between gender diversity and employee performance of public universities in Western Kenya. A correlation analysis was carried out and it was established that there is a significant moderate positive association between gender diversity and employee performance in public universities in Kenya $r=0.428$, $p<0.001$, $CL=95\%$. This means that when gender diversity improves, then employee performance also improves in public universities in Kenya. The results corroborates with McMillan-Capehart (2003) who used the resource-based view of the firm to argue that gender diversity at the management and organizational levels can provide a

firm with a competitive advantage. The study’s results found a positive relationship between gender diversity and employee performance when performance was operationalized as a return on equity.

Hypothesis Testing

The null hypothesis of the study was; **H₀. There is no significant relationship between gender diversity and employee performance in public universities in Western Kenya.** The results are shown in table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Hypothesis testing on Gender diversity and Employee performance

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1116.211	14	79.729		9.754
0.000					
Within Groups	637.595	78	8.174		
Total	1753.806	92			

The study tested the null hypothesis (H₀) that there is no significant relationship between gender diversity and employee performance in public universities in western Kenya. The F distribution table gave a reading of critical value= 2.96 and $F(14, 39) = 9.754$, $2.96 < 9.754$, because the calculated values is greater than the critical value, therefore we reject the null hypothesis, this means that it is statistically very unlikely that the null hypothesis (H₀) is true. We revert to the alternative hypothesis (H₁) that there is a significant relationship between gender diversity and employee performance in public universities in Western Kenya. The results corroborates with Al-Ahmed (2017) where the researcher confirmed that gender diversity had positive effects toward productive group operations and procedures were boosted through diversity- focused human resources practices. Moreover, Alicia & Thomas (2016) study on the impact of gender diversity on the research quality of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom, argues that there is existence of a positive impact of gender diversity on institutional research quality due to possible synergy effects.

Employee Performance

Employee performance in public universities in Western Kenya is very critical because it determines whether they are to achieve their objectives or not. Employee performance also tends to enhance their corporate image. The study, therefore, sought to measure the extent to which employee performance contributes to achievement of organizational objectives in public universities in Western Kenya.

Descriptive Statistics

The research results are shown in Table 4.5 using a Likert scale of 1-5 where 5= Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2= Disagree; 1 = strongly disagree, M= Mean, SD= standard deviation and % = Percentage of Respondents.

Table 4.5 Employee Performance

S/N	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	M
	SD						
a)	Employees in the organization achieve their specified targets % 3.80 1.07	%	4.3	7.5	20.4	39.8	28.0
b)	The work performed by employees is of high quality 34.4 3.97 0.98	%	2.2	5.4	20.4	37.6	
c)	Employees complete their work in accordance to time set 3.92 1.03	%	2.2	7.5	21.5	33.3	35.5
d)	Employees optimize resources to get maximum results 35.5 3.92 1.15	%	7.5	4.3	11.8	40.9	
e)	The employees in the organization are creative 4.13 0.87 and innovative	%	2.2	2.2	12.9	46.2	36.6
Overall Mean and SD						3.95	1.01

The study sought information on employee performance and results from table 4.5 show that a total of 67.8% of the respondents agreed while 7.6% disagreed on the first item which was on employees in the organization being able to achieve their specified targets. 20.4% of the respondents were neutral and the mean value was 3.80 indicating that to a large extent employees in public universities achieve their specified targets. This is supported by studies conducted by Connell et al., (2003) who sought to establish factors leading to successful performance of organizations. The study revealed that organizations are able to do better if their employees are focused and perform their tasks as expected of them.

In addition, the study sought information on the quality of the work performed by the employees. The results of the research reveal that a total of 72% of the respondents agreed while 7.6% disagreed. 20.4% of the respondents were neutral and the mean value for this item was 3.97 showing that to a large extent the work performed by employees in public universities is of high quality. The findings of this study are a true reflection of the studies conducted by Kraut and Kormon (2000) who sought to establish factors influencing successful performance of organizations in the agricultural sector in parts of Germany. The study revealed that the basis for successful performance is the expectation that employees will perform above expectations.

Nevertheless, the study also sought information on employees' completing their work in accordance to the time set. Results of the study reveal that a total of 68.8% of the respondents agreed while 9.7% disagreed with the statement. 21.5% of the respondents were neutral and the mean of the item was 3.92 revealing that to a large extent employees in public universities complete their work in accordance to the time set. The results of this study corroborate studies conducted by Cornelius (2010) who sought to establish the indicators of employee performance in an organization. The study revealed that accomplishing the assigned roles on time played a major role. Torlak and Koc (2007)

indicate that organizations can achieve their objectives if only they set their priorities right and meet the expected threshold on time.

The study also sought information on the ability of employees to optimize resources to maximize on results and the study results show that cumulatively 76.4% of the respondents agreed while 11.8% disagreed. 11.8% of the respondents were neutral on this item and the mean value of 3.92 revealing that to a large extent employees in public universities optimize resources to maximize results. The results support Salihu, Salihu, and Musa (2016) study which examined the impact of organizational culture on employee performance in Nigeria. Findings from study revealed that Consistency as a factor of organizational culture was found to be a significant predictor of job efficiency

The last item on employee performance sought information on the level of employees' creativity and innovativeness. The study results reveal that a total of 82.8% of the respondents agreed while only 4.4% disagreed with the statement. In addition, 12.9% of the respondents were neutral and the mean value of 4.13 was realized showing that to a large extent employees in public universities have high level of creativity and innovativeness. The results of this study are true reflection of the studies conducted by Kruse et al., (2010) who sought to investigate factors influencing employee productivity in an organization. The study revealed that creativity among other factors played a major role in employee productivity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, gender diversity positively influences employee performance in public universities in Western Kenya as shown by the regression, correlation and hypothesis testing models. There is a statistically significant moderate positive association between gender diversity and employee performance. Majority of the employees in public universities are positive about gender diversity practices and opportunities for growth and promotion exist for the female gender. However, these institutions should strive to increase representation of female employees in leadership positions in teams. Gender diversity is associated with intangible and socially complex resources that can provide a firm with a sustained competitive advantage. This competitive advantage should lead to higher organizational performance (Gant, 1991).

Recommendations

Public universities should come up with motivation programs that recognize younger employees in team success this is because majority of the team leaders are experienced and mature employees and much of the recognition for team success goes to them. The study further recommends that future studies on workforce diversity be undertaken and extend the scope by including other workforce diversity variables not covered in this study. Since the study concentrated on public universities, there is also need to undertake similar studies in private and other public sector institutions.

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