

**EMPLOYEE RELATIONS PRACTICES AND
PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN MOUNT
KENYA REGION**

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**A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
Conferment of the Degree of Master of Business Administration in the Meru
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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other university

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To all of you, receive God's blessings.

DEDICATION

To my dear husband Micheal, my daughters Linet and Abigael, my brother Isaac, niece Margaret and my parents Mr & Mrs Wanderi.

ABSTRACT

The performance of public universities in terms of offering quality education training and their ability to overcome the skills mismatch in the demand driven global and national labour markets is a key indicator of the universities ability to realize their position and potential in this competitive sector of technological transformation as well as becoming drivers of knowledge economy. For this to come to full realization there is need to institute employee relation practices which would enable these universities to attain their mission and this is fueled through instilling practices that support the human capital asset. Thus, when the employee-employer relationships are streamlined through active staff participation, involvement and engagement and having defined structures recognizing employee critical importance at the workplace then there would be high productivity which would result to organizational performance. The objectives of this study were to establish how the various employee relations practices of employee voice, staff promotions and employee engagement at public universities in Mount Kenya region influenced their performance. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study locale was all public universities in Mount Kenya Region and the target population was 2984 employees drawn from both the teaching and non-teaching staff as well as human resource officers. The study adopted stratified random and purposive sampling procedures and the study derived a sample size of 271 employees. Data was gathered by use of a questionnaire which was subjected to pre-test to ensure its reliability and validity. Piloting of the questionnaire to check on its reliability was done from South Eastern Kenya University which was outside the sampled public universities in Mount Kenya region whose results were not included in the final research project results. All the questionnaires were termed as valid with 88.6% response rate. Cronbach's alpha was used as a test for reliability while normality test on all variables got a significant level of more than 0.05 which was a clear indication of normal distribution. The study used basic descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages because they could easily be interpreted. Inferential statistical analysis was also adopted to support the model. The study generated both qualitative and quantitative data which adopted the use of five - point likert scales, measures of central tendency and use of multiple regressions analysis. The data was presented through the use of tables, charts and figures. Correlation analysis was used in this study to depict the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. Multiple regression model analysis was used to test the influence of employee voice, staff promotions and employee engagement to public universities performance. The study established a multiple correlation of 0.535 between the employee relation practices and organizational performance. The study drew a conclusion that employee relations practices of employee voice, staff promotions and employee engagement influenced their performance. The study recommended to the universities managements to employ employee voice as the best practice since it was the most significant. It also recommended the use of best promotions practices which were fair and equitable to all employees as this would reduce absenteeism levels, reduce employee turnover and improve overall productivity. The study recommended further areas of study like flexible working arrangements, reward and recognition, continuous training, work place health and safety and work-life balance other than those covered by this study.

It also recommended for a similar study to be carried out in other universities outside Mount Kenya region

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CUE	Commission for University Education
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPUCCF	Inter - Public Universities' Councils Consultative Forum
KUDHEIHA	Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers
KUSU	Kenya Universities Staff Union
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRC	Salaries and Remuneration Commission
UASU	Universities Academic Staff Union
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Employee relations:	Which will be represented by other terms like labour relations and industrial relations which are used interchangeably.
Public University:	Means a public institution founded by the Government of a country and maintained through public funds.
Mount Kenya region,	Refers to a region that is located in the former eastern and central provinces and comprises of Meru, Tharaka Nithi, Embu, Kirinyaga, Murang'a, Nyeri and Nyandarua Counties. Public Universities in the region include Meru University of Science and Technology, Chuka University, University of Embu, Kirinyaga University, Murang'a University, Karatina University and Dedan Kimathi University of Technology.
Employee engagement: are	This refers to a situation in which people at work are interested in and positive, are excited about their jobs and prepared to go an extra mile to get them done to the best of their ability.
Promotion: and	Refers to the advancement to another level of superiority with higher responsibilities that requires additional skills and competencies

Trade unions:	Refers to employee relations bodies formed to protect the workers' interest whereby agreements are prepared.
Employee voice:	It is a whole variety of processes and structures which enable and sometimes empower employees directly or indirectly contribute to decision making in an organization.
Employee involvement:	Refers to work structures and processes that allow the employees to systematically give their inputs into the decisions that affect their work.
Communication:	Refers to the exchange of ideas and information within the organization environment

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study focused on employee relations practices and performance of public universities in Mount Kenya region. Chapter one provided the background information of the topic under study. It covered the statement of the problem, general and specific objectives, research questions, limitation and delimitation as well as the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Universities all over the world are regarded as engines of economics and sustainable national development thus making it the most powerful and critical success factor for the individuals and the society. With over two hundred million higher education institutions in the world, expanding access to the number of students accessing tertiary education is still a high priority on the development of a nation not only to meet international commitment but also importantly to ensure continued supply of educated workforce into an economy.

The performance of both public and private universities has been a major concern to the main industry players including the Government, employees, graduates and the market owing to the fact that university education plays a crucial role in global and national development. Whilst the government longterm policy is to provide a framework for a sustainable, competitive and autonomous national university system, such a policy will have to ensure that development of a diversified financial base and enhancement of managerial independence while at the same time paying attention to the issues of relevance and responsiveness to the market and to the national priorities.

To support this global market responsiveness and competitive nature of these institutions and to enhance their sustained relevance around the globe, human resource management aspect plays a major role to it and must be highly linked to putting in place good employee relations management practices. Human capital therefore being one of the most valuable assets and a major ingredient and component in the organization becomes an important concern at work place because it is the key to success of any organization.

Armstrong (2011) noted that one specific strategy to achievement of organizational performance is use of the best employee relations practices which are linked to achievement of business overall strategy and hence ability to strike a competitive advantage. The organizational business internal and external environments are dynamic in nature and organizations must then keep pace with this changing environment. One of the most valuable and dynamic internal asset in every organization is the human capital hence the need to manage this capital effectively. Human capital management (HCM) was described by the Accounting for People Task force (2003) as a strategic approach to people management that focuses on the issues that are critical to the organization's success. Lawler (2003) made a point that it is very difficult to effectively manage human capital without a system that measures performance and performance capability. Thus, an effective performance management system should be a key building block for every organization's human capital management system.

Dale Yoder (1979) defined employee relations as the relationships between managements and employees or among employees and their organizations that characterize or grow out of employment. It is also the body of work that is concerned with maintaining employer – employee relationships that contribute to satisfactory productivity, motivation and

morale as well as reduction of conflicts between the parties involved. It is essentially concerned with preventing and resolving conflicts involving individuals which arise out of or affect work situations.

In Britain, employee relations came into effect in 1966 with Allan Fox (1966) where the Unitary perspective was characterized by emphasis on cooperative relation at work. It thus rejected the assumption that basic resentment exists between employers and employees' conflicts hence were largely caused by external agitators, trade unions which their interference disrupts the harmonious state of employment relations. Employee relations well put as labour of industrial relations in Kenya was realized when Britons colonized it. From this context, then there came into existence of the existence of strong employees' unions that aim at collectively bargaining for the employees to ensure that they are protected from exploitation, victimization, better remuneration as well as provision of healthy and safe working conditions is witnessed. These unions also advocate for better terms and conditions of work and improved organizational structures which enhance better communication and employee involvement in decision making in the organizations. Thus, through the employees' unions, employee voice is felt in the management of any organization which means that once the employees' voice is heard, they will be motivated and the overall organizational performance improves.

A study carried out in the United Kingdom "New Employee Relations Strategies in Britain" revealed that the solution to the employee relations issues was to have partly strategic involvement but there was need for employee involvement along with it. The unions are thus part of the employee involvement and that was the real aim of entering into mutual agreement of partnership.

'The Engage for Success movement' launched by the UK prime minister in 2011 claims to have employers on board, with a combined total of two million employees (2014) with task groups, a guru group of experts, and what they hoped was the definitive proof that better engagement was certainly associated, if not causally so, with better organizational performance (Rayton *et al.*, 2012)

The management of employee engagement in the UK National Health Service illustrates that properly constructed studies of employee engagement can inform policies and practices to improve work relations, employee well-being and aspects of performance.

Rich *et al.* (2010: 619) in his paper strongly argues that the relationship between work-life balance and job performance can be better connected by a mediating variable which represents a more holistic view of an individual. Employee engagement is that construct which comprises physical, cognitive and emotional aspects of an individual and therefore represents an inclusive view of an individual (Rich *et al.*, 2010). Hence it is intensively recommended that employers must consider employee engagement as a mediating variable which would link work-life balance and job performance in specific to women workforce in Indian hospitality industry.

ILO (2011) report on the employment status globally noted that there was need for sustainable development goals on decent work opportunities to be adhered to by ensuring that equal pay is paid for equal work as well as creating an enabling environment in all areas of employment.

Despite the rapid expansion of higher education over the past two decades globally, challenges of mismatch between skills acquired by the university graduates and the demands of the industry remain. This concurs with UNICEF (2019) on its report on

transition from school to work which found out that there was skills gap and a skills mismatch with seventy-one (71) million unemployed youth worldwide and one hundred and fifty six (156) million young workers living in working poverty of less than three dollars a day. This was linked to lack of labour market and information search and experience as well as mismatch between education inspirations and labour market realities with limited job growth.

University education in the sub-Saharan Africa requires to be demand driven, of high quality, technologically informed, research supported, democratically managed and globally marketable. This is supported by the AUC (2015). Agenda 2063 framework document. The Africa We Want, that requires each and every African member state to align its curriculum to global standards that are acceptable worldwide.

In Kenya, the central role of the universities in the realization of the national development has been emphasized in the Kenya policy documents including Kenya Vision 2030. The Government of Kenyan through the Kenya Vision 2030, identified the need to have the manpower in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programmes in order to achieve the development goals to meet the needs of the changing labour market. It also aimed to create a globally competitive and adaptive human resource base to meet the requirement of this vision. The main potential for Kenya lies in its people, their creativity, work ethics, education and their entrepreneurial skills. The capacity to utilize knowledge and information in designing and production needed to be enhanced to ensure competitiveness for this developing country. It is in this regard, that this was expected to result into quality human resource in health care, education and training as well as training to improve work performance.

The rapid growth in the University subsector in Kenya has seen the increase of the number of public universities from one (1) in the 1970 upto thirty-one (31) in the year 2018 as per CUE, 2018 report. This traces back to the realization of university education back 1951 when the Royal College of East Africa was established in Nairobi, Kenya, (Sifuna 1998). The Royal College of East Africa was later converted into a university and renamed the University College of Nairobi and later in 1970 it was established as the University of Nairobi through an Act of Parliament (University of Nairobi, Act 1970). Due to the need for the Government to reform the education sector and ensure the transfer of knowledge economy, the Government established constituent colleges of the already existing universities in order to handle the increasing demand for higher education. These constituent colleges were established in all regions of the country to enhance access which have since been chartered and elevated to become fully fledged universities in Kenya. These universities were evenly distributed across all regions and among them is Mount Kenya Region. Owing to the high demand for the university education and the unique nature of their programmes, this has seen these universities open satellite campus in major cities in Kenya as supported by Titi (2016) on her study on factors influencing the quality-of-service delivery in Public Universities in Kenya a case of city campuses in Nairobi County.

Along with the increase in the established universities in Kenya, a rapid growth in student enrolment by an increase of 64% from 361, 379 in 2013/2014 to 564, 507 in 2016/2017 has been realized, which has made Kenya to be the highest ranked in the sub-Saharan Africa, CUE 2018. The growth despite being positive has posed challenges to the government financing which has been on the decline, thus the need by the public universities to look for diversifying sources of income and ensure more cost effectiveness

use of institutional resources to enhance their survival without compromising the quality and relevance of education. This also meant the need for strengthening employee relations practices of active staff participation and involvement, putting in place structured promotions practices and offering adequate human capital support to enhance relevance and responsiveness to the market for the teaching and non-teaching staff to be able to adequately handle these dynamic labour market demands, and employee engagement which would result to improved performance of public universities. The international labour organization, ILO (2011), on the status of employment globally, recommended in their report that there was need for national compliance to labour rights which included freedom of association and collective bargaining agreements so as to promote an enabling work environment for all as this supports human relations best practices.

The university subsector is expected to provide the manpower required to achieve the Kenya Vision 2030, Big Four Agenda and all other national development goals. The sessional paper no. 14 of 2012 articulated the need to strengthen and grow academic programmes that supported the national priority and strategic areas. There has been tremendous efforts by the government and partners to try and improve the quality and relevance of quality of programmes offered in Kenyan universities. This is because the quality and relevance of skill development are key to global competitiveness and internationalization as well as improving an individual access to decent employment and thus for organizations to compete in the global economy, the quality of teaching must attain national and international standards and be relevant to the needs of the national and international labour markets.

The universities may not be able to sustain themselves with the resources they currently receive from various income streams (CUE Report 2018). If this trend is not remedied, the university subsector may not be able to meet its objectives as specified in the Universities Act 2012 section 3(1) and thus the government must increase funding to enhance capacity development. Financial health of an institution determines the quality and quantity of all the other resources an institution can afford. While acknowledging that declining finances and revenues have become a common feature across the globe, universities are expected to rethink sustainability strategies that will see them weather the storm presently and guarantee the sustainability in the future.

CUE 2018, report noted that curricula reviews should identify programmes that address the changing labour needs as well as keeping pace with the competitive global environment and other emerging issues. The relevance of the programmes offered in the universities is therefore very important and should be given consideration whenever programmes are developed. It is incumbent upon universities to regularly review their programmes to determine their value, current status and validity both in terms of discipline based on knowledge and cross cutting skills. The report further articulated that a majority of 55% of academic staff had masters level of education while PhD holders accounted for only 36%. This modelled a serious implication in terms of academic leaders to run academic staff. This gap translates to effect on quality of teaching and research in universities. Universities therefore need to strive to develop capacity of staff through trainings in terms of furthering their students through scholarships and creating a conducive working environment to enable staff develop to full capacity. It also highlighted lack of institutional capacity to support adoption and absorption of modern technology to keep pace with the globalization and digitization requires the government

to provide adequate resources required to facilitate knowledge transfer through capacity building.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010, Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2019 on 'reforming education and training for sustainable development in Kenya supports the implementation of the skills through career development across the universities. This concurs with the findings of UNICEF (2019) that noted that to improve and strengthen the quality and market relevance of skills provision, there was need to improve on service delivery by improving initial and continuing teaching faculty professional development and ensure alignment of curriculum to some specific skills that are labour market demand driven. The government should therefore work with universities to develop and implement capacity building programmes in order to handle both national and global market demand. The ability to create a human resource base was key to attaining Kenya's global competitiveness that would constantly be subjected to retraining and access to technological learning within employment. This specific human capital would ultimately play a key role in contributing not only to efficiency gains in existing economic activities but also in diversifying economic sectors and activities in order to realize productivity gains.

The employee relations climate which puts a lot of emphasis on the respect of employee voice and employee participation is common practice in the universities operations because they are democratically managed. This represents the perceptions of government, management, employees and employees' unions and their perspectives about the ways in which employee relations are conducted and how various parties be it management, employees and trade unions behave when dealing with one another. This can be created by the management style adopted by management or by the behavior of trade unions or

employee representatives by them interacting with one another (Armstrong, 2016). Improvements to this climate could be attained by developing fair employee relations policies and procedures and implementing them consistently. This in the long run creates harmonious relationships which are generally maintained on a day-to-day basis and results to mutual cooperation rather than creating conflicts. In Kenya, this tripartite relationship has been supported through the formation of three strong unions like Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU), Kenya Universities Staff Union (KUSU) as well as Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA). However, if this aspect is ignored, these universities over time experience employee turn overs, low staff morale, low productivity and compromised quality teaching arising from the failure by their managements and the government failing to honor agreements with their employees after protracted collective bargaining agreements negotiations. These violations run counter to the development of good labour practices and to counter this, unions engage in lock outs and strikes emanating for which affect their overall performance.

The nature of employee relations then and the basic relationship between profit and wages, authority and compliance create a persistent tension between the employers, employees, management and the entire workforce. It's therefore essential to acknowledge the value associated with employee relations that are distinct from economic efficiency. Encouraging two-way dialogue as well as establishing effective channels of communication which support employee participation, involvement and engagement would be contributing factors improving organizations performance. Factors such as employee voice, staff promotions and employee engagement are therefore key to influencing the organizational performance.

In Tanzania, Janes (2018) conducted a study on effects of employee relations on employee performance and organizational Performance-Study of Small Organizations, the results of the findings established that there is a positive statistical significant relationship between employee relations and employee performance also between employee relations and organizational performance hence the need to focus more on implementing fair labour practices and building effective and sustainable employee relations that would ensure their growth and survival. The study indicators were improved employee relations enhanced teamwork, communication, discipline, promotes employee morale and hence results to high productivity.

The onset of globalization has seen employment demands shifting towards higher specialized skills categories and therefore it is imperative for universities to invest on the pool of its highly skilled and competitive workforce to meet the national and global dynamics. This is highly emphasized in the Kenya Vision 2030 blueprint which requires Kenya to sustain its status of being a technological hub and for this to be realized the Government of Kenya has made tremendous improvement in providing connectivity to strengthen the foundation for a knowledge economy. Owing to this therefore there is need to appoint teaching and non-teaching faculty staff of higher calibre in the information, technology and communication domains in learning institutions so as to realize this technological transformation and hence the need for according high priority to capacity building.

The major challenge facing education and training sector in Kenya is the mismatch between skills produced and industry needs. Improving the relevance and reducing skills mismatch of skill development requires the establishment of a labour market information system and anticipation of skills demand for a reliable and realistic assessment of

economic trends and labour market's needs (National Skills Development Policy, 2020). Therefore, for the demand of skills to be realized there is need to align the supply and composition of skilled workers with the demand of human resource requirements in the country.

Titi Wairimu (2016) conducted a study on factors influencing quality of service delivery in public universities in Kenya case of city campuses in Nairobi County which found out that there was a reduction in the number of senior lecturers and professors with PhD qualification which was lower by far viz – a – viz the number of lecturers with masters qualification and concluded that the universities should adopt and institute training programmes and come up with a clear career development framework so as to enhance quality and responsiveness to the global and national labour market demands. This study concurred with Commission for University Education statistics report of 2018 which found out that majority of academic staff were masters degree holders and that the proportion of academic staff with PhD qualification was 36% and a majority of academic staff were senior lecturers while professors were the least. It further indicated that the lower ranks of lecturer, tutorial fellows and graduate assistants accounted for 79% of all academic staff in both public and private universities. The report also indicated that the professors and associate professors were above 51 years and this posed a shortage of professors in the future and the implication of a declining academic leadership provided by them would have an adverse effect on quality of training and research. It also meant the challenge in having adequate staff to supervise doctorate students further aggravating staff capacity growth at PhD levels. It thus recommended to the universities the need to prioritize training of staff to fill up senior positions to replace the aging faculty in order to maintain quality education training and research.

Muthoka M.K (2017) conducted a study in the public health sector on the influence of employee relations practices on organizational performance of public healthcare sector in Kenya. The study recommended to the management in public healthcare sector to embrace sound employee relations practices such as alternative conflict resolution practices as current union voice does not influence organizational performance. Areas recommended for further research were staff promotion, organizational commitment, employee engagement, work environment among many and their influence to organizational performance. This study revolved around these recommended areas since similar characteristics were observed in the public universities in Kenya.

A survey by CPS (2018) on the state of research funding in Kenyan universities, indicated that in terms of institutional research culture, there was a challenge in terms of institutional support in most universities in Kenya where only 34% of the institutions had 20-39 staff fully active in research and only 8% had 50-79 qualified academic staff for research. It thus recommended then that capacity building of faculty staff was key in terms of recruiting more staff as well as improving infrastructure for research.

However, despite the competitive edge that may be secured from sources such as product innovation, technological change and the more efficient utilization of energy and raw materials, the manner in which and the terms and conditions under which a workforce performs its functions will normally have a major bearing on the organizational long term success. The concern of employee relations therefore is not only on the efficiency of the organizations, the control of labour and resolution of conflicts but also in the interests of workers, improved conditions of their work and remuneration for their effort.

Ng'ethe 2014 in his study on employee retention in universities in Kenya which involved the only existing seven public universities in Kenya found out that employee turnover was at 2733 while according to a study by Mboya 2018, private universities were found to lose 276 employees between 2010 and 2017. Lack of proper retention strategies, undefined career development policies and lack of talent management as well as bureaucracy in universities were cited as major players to this turnover. Similar characteristics were also observed in public universities in Mount Kenya region as supported through a study conducted by Saverio 2018 on the determinants of employee turnover in public universities in Kenya, a case of universities in Nyeri county and found out that 46.8 percent of employee turnover was caused by style of leadership adopted and lack of supervisory support while 56.8 percent was due to lack of clear career growth and promotional activities.

It is against this background that this study sought to find out if these gaps would be addressed through initiating variables of employee voice, staff promotions, and employee engagement to influence the performance of public universities in Mount Kenya Region.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The performance public universities and their ability to survive at the surge of globalization and digitization heavily depends on how well they adapt to this environment so as to hit their competitive advantage. One of the most influential strategy is believing and enhancing the ability of its human capital by improving the human relations management climate through the employment of the best employee practices which translates to be the major ingredient to their success.

Employees in these universities achieve better results and become loyal to their entities when they are fully engaged and actively involved in the decision-making processes as this makes them appreciate the consequences of their actions. Creating an environment where employee voice is respected and the democratic nature of unions is placed at the epicenter improves organization efficiency as happy employees hardly leave their workplace. If this aspect is ignored, these universities over time experience employee turn overs, low staff morale, low productivity and compromised quality teaching and ultimately low performance.

The findings of the Commission for University Education (2018), cited a challenge in having adequate staff to supervise, mentor doctorate students and guide on uptake of research further aggravating staff capacity growth at PhD levels. To curb this trend, there was need to develop staff promotional practices as well as prioritizing staff training through initiation of programs that will develop skills thus becoming a strategy to mitigate the challenges of jobs skills matching with the current demands of the labour

industry. Thus, the managements of the public universities need to be attentive to career development as this would help in attracting and retaining valuable employees.

It is view of the arguments above that this study sought to establish the influence that the variables of employee voice, staff promotions, and employee engagement have on the performance of the public universities in Mount Kenya Region.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General objective of the study

To establish the influence of employee relations practices on performance of public universities in the Mount Kenya Region.

1.3.2 Specific objectives of the Study

1. To assess how employee voice influences the performance of public universities in the Mount Kenya Region.
2. To determine how the staff promotions influences the performance of public Universities in the Mount Kenya Region.
3. To establish how employee engagement influences the performance of public Universities in the Mount Kenya Region

1.4 Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between employee voice and the performance of public universities in the Mount Kenya Region?
2. What is the influence of staff promotions on the performance of public Universities in Mount Kenya Region?

3. Does employee engagement influence the performance of public Universities in Mount Kenya Region?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study covered employee relations practices and their influence on the performance of public universities in Mount Kenya Region. It was carried out in Meru University of Science and Technology, Chuka University, University of Embu, Kirinyaga University, Murang'a University, Karatina University and Dedan Kimathi University of Technology which are all located in Mount Kenya region. The study enjoined both teaching and non-teaching staff since employee relations issues cuts across all employees of universities. The study also relied on the respondents who had basic minimum education qualifications which would make them answer the questions without consulting.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study would help the scholars in identifying the gaps which are within the selected universities so as to reduce employee dissatisfaction and create a conducive working environment and improve organizational performance. It will enlighten management of best employee relations practices to employ at workplace to improve organizational performance. It will be a recipe to improving organization's productivity and employee's motivation. The Ministry of Education will be informed on the policies to put in place to improve on the quality of graduands leaving for the labor market while the Commission for University Education will be able to lay down the requirements that the universities programmes need to align themselves with to ensure relevance and the quality of graduands released to the industry. It will also help the other scholars because it will be a secondary source of information in their research work. The immediate community will

also benefit because once the structures of the organization are well defined there will be improved service delivery which will reduce time wastage and they will also be able to identify their rights and the right channels of communication and this will improve relations hence building the corporate image.

1.7 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

1.7.1. Limitations of the Study

The research was confronted by certain limitations like the unavailability of research materials in areas related to employee relations specialty. The employees belonging to the trade unions would not be willing to share most of the information because of fear of victimization from the management of their respective universities and suspicion. The researcher overcame these by assuring respondents of confidentiality and anonymity of their responses as well as subscribing to international journals so as to access other information to assist in the research.

1.7.2. Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to the staff members of both the academic and non-academic division as well as human resource officers in the public universities in Mount Kenya region. It was also delimited to respondents who had diploma qualifications and above. This enabled the respondents who were conversant with the operations of the universities to give correct information which effectively assisted the researcher to achieve the objectives of the study.

1.8 Assumptions

The study assumed that:

- i. The respondents were conversant with the prevailing labour laws and policies.
- ii. The respondents had the basic education of diploma qualifications and above.
- iii. The respondents had adequate knowledge on the human relations management policies in their universities.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed both theoretical, empirical and conceptual framework based on employee relations theories. The researcher focused on the variables of employee voice, staff promotion and employee engagement and their influence on the performance of Public Universities in Mount Kenya Region.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Theory of Human Relations

It was developed by Elton Mayo and a group of social scientist researchers 1927, when they carried out the Hawthorne Experiment. The theory of human relations generally focused on the individual needs and resultant behaviors of individuals and groups and presented both formal and informal elements of the organizations. Whereas the formal elements of the organizations are represented by the formal structures put in place, informal aspects which were inclusive of interactions between individuals brought out the social systems aspect of the organizations.

The experiment by Elton Mayo and his group of researchers, established that the productivity of the employees was not the function of only physical conditions of work and money wages paid to them but productivity of employees depended heavily upon the satisfaction of the employees in their work situation. Mayo's idea was that logical factors were far less important than emotional factors in determining productivity efficiency. In this theory, the employees are seen as human beings rather than meagre human

supplement of machinery or hands at work. It subsequently established that better – off workers were the secrets to prosperous organizations. Furthermore, of all the human factors influencing employee behavior, the most powerful were those emanating from the worker’s participation in social groups since motivation depended on teamwork requiring coordination and cooperation of individuals involved and the teams should fulfil both their individual objectives as well as the organizational objectives simultaneously. This theory also established that the rate of absenteeism and turnover was lower due to the role of team creation because when those teams generated a situation of active cooperation along with the policies and means of the company. Thus, Mayo concluded that work arrangements in addition to meeting the objective requirements of production must at the same time satisfy the employee’s subjective requirement of social satisfaction at work place. This social system therefore needed to be managed in order to create individual job satisfaction and the resultant motivation of the individual. This experiment found out that group dynamics which was part of the organizational social factor were important determinants of job performance and output. It also found out that employees were not only solely motivated by compensation but also perceived meaning and importance of ones work were the primary determinants of output. Communication and participation between management became an important and essential instrument to understand employee issues in human’s relations movement. For this therefore to be achieved, an effective two-way communication network was essential.

Thus, the applicability of this theory in this study was essential because it informed the management of organizations on the influence of well-established communication networks and need for participation in organizational activities as these would lead to

high productivity arising from the employee satisfaction. Hence, employee's morale became an important ingredient to an organizations higher output.

2.2.2 Expectancy Theory

It was developed by Victor Vroom (1964) and then Porter and Lawler (1968). Vroom is this theory attempted to explain behavior in terms of individual goals, choices and expectations of achieving them. The theory made assumptions that employees can determine the outcome they preferred and make realistic estimates of the chances of attaining those goals.

Vroom expectancy theory cited the factors of expectancy, instrumentality and valence to be influencing persons motivation. Whereas expectancy refers to an individual's perception of the chances or the probability that a particular outcome will occur to a certain behavior, valence is the value that those individual places on the outcome. The theory also stated that motivation was high when people knew what they have to do to get a reward and that that the effort they put was dependent on the likelihood that rewards would follow the effort and that the reward was worthwhile. The key thing here was that there must be a link between effort and reward and the reward would be achievable and worthwhile.

According to Vroom, expectancy was about the expectations of the employees from their own efforts in relation to good performance and organizations should respond to this scenario by identifying the factors that would inspire the employees to give their best in the performance of their duties. On the other hand, Porter and Lawler came up with an extended version of Vroom's expectancy theory which denoted that there was a direct relationship between the satisfaction of an individual with his or her performance. This

theory became of importance because it assisted in the proper reward identification for an individual to motivate him to perform more efficiently to get the desired outcome.

It emphasized that mere effort was not enough and thus it had to be effective effort which would produce the desired performance. The desired outcome was subject to the performance and this would be promoted by the organizations attaching extra bonuses or promotions. Thus, if employees were enlightened about the staff promotion at workplace, they would be able to increase their levels of intelligence, knowledge ability and do that which they were required so that their effort was rewarded either intrinsically or extrinsically. Factors such as wages and salaries commensurate with the job, job security and promotions increased an employee's devotion at workplace. This ultimately led to improved morale hence improved organizational performance.

2.2.3 Social Cognitive Theory

It was developed by Bandura (1986) and it was based on his central concept of self – efficacy. It suggested that what people believe they can or cannot do powerfully impacts on their performance. Thus, developing and strengthening positive self-belief in employees was therefore an important performance management objective.

In support of the above theory, Armstrong (2016) indicated that the overall objective of performance management was to develop capacity of people to meet and exceed expectations and to achieve their full potential to the benefit of themselves and the organization. As Buchner (2007) emphasizes that performance is not just a top-down process in which managers tell their subordinates what they think about them, set objectives and institute performance improvement plans but it should be something that is done for the people in partnership with them. It involved managers and those whom they

manage acting as partners within a framework that sets out how they can best work together to achieve the required results. It was based on the principle of management by contract and agreement rather than management by command. It relied on consensus and cooperation rather than control or coercion.

Based on the above, employee involvement and engagement in the decision-making processes in the organization improved their confidence and boosted their positive belief and hence improved the organizational performance. This was due to the fact that their performance was measured by the objectives that have been agreed on by them and the managers as guided by the spirit of teamwork.

2.3 Empirical Framework

2.3.1 Employee Voice and Performance

Armstrong (2016) defines employee voice as the say employees have in matters of concern to them in the organization. It described a two-way dialogue that allowed employees to influence events at work and includes processes of involvement, participation, upward problem solving and upward communication.

Employee voice describes how employees raise concerns, express their interests, solve problems, and contribute to and participate in workplace decision-making (Pyman et al., 2006) on their study a comparison of the effectiveness of employee voice arrangements in Australia.

Elendu, V. C.(2018) in his study concluded that employees give importance to employers for their communication procedures that affect their efficiency and motivation level and thus employee relations create competitive advantage for the organization.

Nwata, Phipip, U., & Amah, E. (2016) on their study on internal organizational communication and employees' performance in selected banks in Port Harcourt concluded that organization communication was strongly associated with employee performance and thus recommended that organization should incorporate adequate measures in ensuring that communication within the organization was clear, consistent and follows well recognized and formally instituted channels to facilitate more efficient and effective workforce.

Alam (2016) in his study on Communication Satisfaction on a study on junior executives working in private sector in Bangladesh made a recommendation for developing and maintaining a better organizational communication to achieve the desired performance and to sustain competition in the long run.

Odhong', A. & Omolo, J. (2014) in their study on analysis of the factors affecting employee relations in the flower industry in Kenya: A case of Waridi Ltd, Athi River concluded that free communication and information flow was important in promoting employee relations which lead to improved work performance.

Atambo, W., & Momanyi, D. (2016) on their study on the effects of internal communication on employee performance: A Case Study of Kenya Power and Lighting Company, South Nyanza Region, Kenya found out that there was a strong correlation between performance in the overall effectiveness and the levels of communication that exists in an organization and thus agreed that at all levels, communication aids the flow of information and hence increases the performance of the staff. The study was cognizant of the fact that through effective communication systems, information is timely and improves performance and execution of duties and responsibilities.

A study by Femi, A. F. (2014) on the impact of communication on workers' performance in selected organisations in Lagos State, Nigeria revealed that a relationship existed between effective communication and workers performance, productivity and commitment and recommend to the managers the need to communication with their employees regularly in order to improve their participation and performance.

2.3.2 Staff Promotions and Performance

According to Gupta (2011) promotion refers to a higher post carrying greater responsibilities, higher status, and better salary. It is also seen as an important factor in influencing motivation and work performance.

Promotion calls for an advancement of an employee from one job to another that has a higher salary range, higher level job title, more and higher job responsibilities in an organization. Promotions play a vital role in determining the performance of employees. Promotions aims at reducing discontentment and unrest and hence furnish an effective incentive for initiative, enterprise and ambition (Yoder 1972). Since promotions are an integral part of most people's careers then, most employees who are working always look forward to promotions which usually means more pay, responsibilities or privileges and often leads to job satisfaction and ultimately increased productivity. The level of pay should supply both parties with a reasonable return on investment.

Saharuddin & Sulaiman, (2016) in their study on effect of promotion and compensation toward working productivity through job satisfaction and working motivation of employees in the department of water and mineral resources energy, North Aceh District have shown that promotion influences employee performance

Rashid, Hamza, & Said, (2018) in their study on impacts of Rewards, Promotions and Supervisor Support on Academic Staff's Performance: An Empirical Study in Malaysian Universities concluded that seeking for promotion motivates the better workers to retain and participate in the human capital and also that for better performance to be obtained it called for greater promotion chances and vice versa.

Muhammad, Nasina & Loganathan (2019) on their study on the influence of Salary, Promotion, and Recognition toward Work Motivation among Government Trade Agency Employees concluded that employees are motivated by good and the best reward program which is consisted of salary, promotion, recognition and etc. Thus, it also satisfies employees in performing their job.

2.3.3 Employee Engagement and Performance

Zinger (2010) defined "employee engagement as the art and science of engaging people in authentic and recognized connections to strategy, roles, performance, organization, community, relationship, customers, development, energy and transform the work.

An empirical study by Gikonyo (2018) on the influence of employee engagement on performance was conducted and it found that was it mediated by organizational commitment. A recommendation of considering personal traits while hiring and creation of conducive conditions in the work place lead to acceptance of organizational goals as well as motivating employees to put in extra effort to ensure their achievement and hence overall organizational performance.

Research on human resource management in organization's by Robinson (2006) suggested there was considerable evidence that many employees were greatly under-utilized in the workplace through the lack of involvement in work-based decisions.

Employee involvement was seen as a central principle of 'soft' HRM, where the focus was upon capturing the ideas of employees and securing their commitment (Beardwell and Claydon 2007) as per their study on 'Human Resource Management, A Contemporary Approach'. The concept of employee involvement was strongly grounded in unitarist views of organizations, as it assumes that managers and employees have the same interests.

BL Rich, JA Lepine, ER Crawford (2010) on their study on job engagement concluded that practices that engender engagement among employees can enhance job performance and these improvements are likely to come in the form of both task performance and organizations citizenship behavior.

It has been argued that one of the main drivers of employee engagement is for employees to have the opportunity to feed their view upwards (Truss et al 2013) in their survey '*Working Life: Employee Attitudes and Engagement*'. Their survey concluded that currently many organizations are not very successful in doing this and as a result many employees felt they lacked opportunities to express their views and be involved in decisions. On the other hand, researchers at Towers, Perrin (2003) on his study on working today: understanding what drives employee engagement found employers are doing well in giving employees the freedom to make decisions relating to their jobs; 62 per cent of respondents argued they have an appropriate amount of decision-making authority to do their job well.

Gupta, A. & Sethi, J.A., (2012) on their study on impact of quality of work- life on employees perceived performance, job satisfaction and employee commitment concluded that quality work life has a significant on an employee's task as well as the overall performance of the organization.

‘A study on the role of employee engagement in the relationship between job design and task performance, citizenship and deviant behaviours’ by Amanda, Kerstin, Truss, Catherine and Soane, Emma (2013) added that if organizations ensure jobs provide individuals with variety, significance, autonomy and feedback, then people would be more engaged at work, leading to positive performance outcomes and low deviance levels.

First, and at a very general level, our results suggest that practices that engender engagement among employees can enhance job performance, and these improvements in job performance are likely to come in the form of both task performance and organizational citizenship behavior.

2.3.4 Employee Relations and Performance

Sequeira & Dhriti (2015) on their study on employee relations and its impact on employee performance revealed that by improving the employee relations practices an organization can improve the performance of employees and thereby the overall productivity of the organization.

Employees are the most important asset for an organization since they are the key components to propel the organization to achieve goals. Successful organization stem from the effectiveness of job performance of its employees (Kiruja & Mukuru, 2018; Mone & London, 2018) in their study on effect of motivation on employee performance’.

Ackon (2018) in his study ‘Employee relations and productivity’ concluded that organizations should provide inspiring and effective leadership, open and transparent communication which lead to motivated employees and enhanced productivity; improve communication with the employees through exchanging ideas, feelings and opinions with management; and lastly involve their employees in decision making which would

improve trust between them. This study also found out that employee – employer relationship was vital to the success the any organization or enterprise and therefore employees should have the interests of their employees at heart so as know and understand their needs and the methods satisfying those needs.

2.4 Conceptual framework

A Conceptual framework is a diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables and the moderating variables.

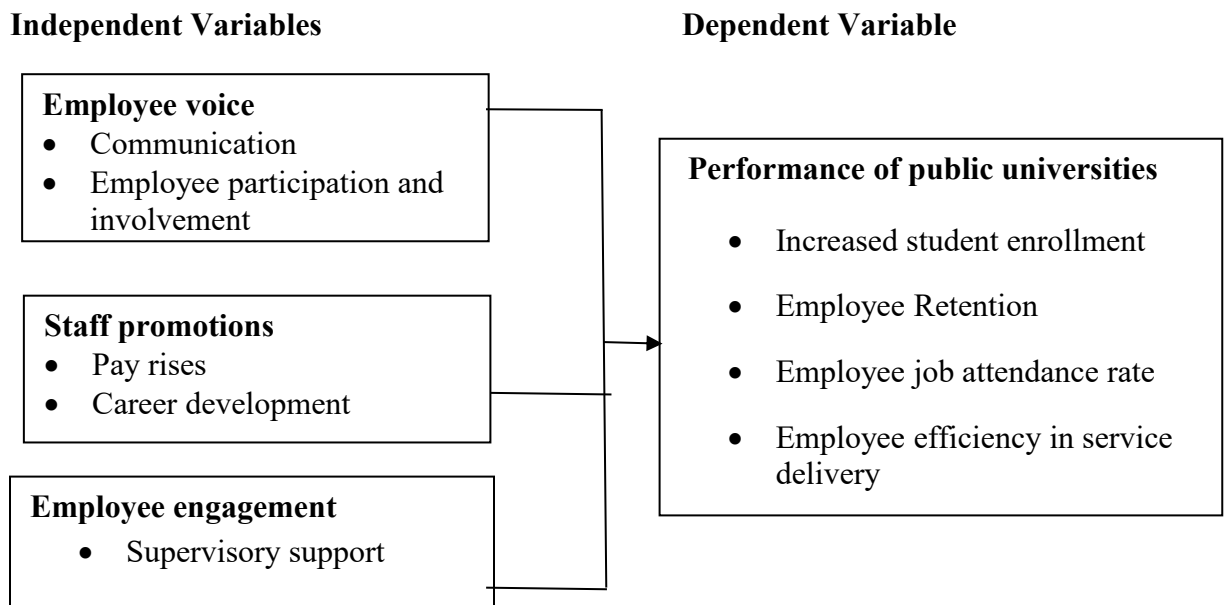


Fig. 2.4: Conceptual Framework

2.4.1 Employee Relations Practices

Employee relations is a set of organizational functions and practices that deals with issues related to people as staffing, compensation and benefit, performance management, organizational development, health and safety, communication and administration (Muhammed, Sohail, & Riaz 2013).

Employee relations are basically about how managements and employees live together and what can be done to make that work. Employment relationship, which involves handling the pay–work bargain, dealing with employment practices, terms and conditions of employment, issues arising from employment, providing employees with a voice and communicating with employees. They consist of the approaches and methods adopted by employers to deal with employees either collectively through their trade unions or individually (Armstrong, 2016).

2.4.2. Employee Voice

Boxall and Purcell (2003) defined employee voice to cover a whole variety of processes and structures which enable and sometimes empower employees directly or indirectly to contribute to decision making in the firm. It is seen as the ability of employees to influence the actions of the employer (Armsstrong, 2016).

The concept of employee voice covers the provision of opportunities for employees to register discontent, express complaints or grievances and modify the power of management and sometimes brings collective and individual techniques into one framework. Individual voice involves contacts between management and employees without involvement of trade unions while employee voice it expressed through representatives and power based (Boxall and Purcell (2003)).

According to Section 2 of the Trade Unions Act Cap 223, a trade union is an association or combination of more than six people other than a staff association, employee's association the principal objects of which are under its constitution the regulation of the relations between employees and employers, or between employers and employees and it also includes an association or combination of trade unions. Trade unions in employee

relations context is thus an association of workers/employees in one or more occupations in a working environment. For good and sound industrial relations then unions must be strengthened and must effectively participate in the formulation of universities policies so that workers and employers may better appreciate the consequences of their actions.

The National Employment Policy and Strategies (2010) Gambia, noted that to enhance institutional capability and capacity, there was need to promote collective bargaining to advocate for decent work, improve the working conditions of the employees as well as establishment of a viable and efficient labour market information system and employment services section.

According to Saleemi (2009), since labour unions seek, through collective action to give workers a formal and independent voice in setting the terms and conditions of work, if they are not politically influenced, they work towards achieving the objectives hence improving organizational performance

Communication in the organizations is usually influenced by the organizational structures in place. An organization structure is defined as the formal system of authority relationships and tasks that control and coordinate employee actions and behavior to achieve goals in organizations (Jones (2013). Organizational structure describes the formal arrangement of jobs and tasks in organizations (Robbins and Coulter (2007); it describes the allocation of authority and responsibility, and how rules and regulation are executed by workers in firms (Nahm et al., 2003). Thus, with the tremendous growth in the Universities, it will mean additional hierarchies of authority hence making communication channels complex hence the management of these organizations must work towards enhancing these structures so as to allow smooth and free flow of

information. If this is achieved, it will result to employees being involved thus improving the quality of decision making, increased job satisfaction and ultimately improved organizational performance.

An important factor that improves employee participation at workplace is the interpersonal skill behavioral trait that is key to improving employee involvement and therefore the need for the employees to work collaboratively with their team mates to achieve the organizational goals as well as building consensus for tasks purpose and give direction to team members. This way the management in place listens, cares and supports its members and by so doing employees feel that they are treated with respect and sensitivity thus building and maintaining positive relationship among the team mates. An effective management style which is all involving enhances team building spirit which is a source of reconciling conflict system. The management strikes this advantage by effectively communicating organizational goals, strategies and objectives as well as involving others, listening to them and building commitments. Thus, by appropriately adapting a style of leadership and tone to accommodate a variety of audience and cadres of employees in the workplace makes the organization hit its competitive advantage.

As defined by Benson et al (2006), high involvement work practices are a specific set of human resource practices that focus on employee decision making, power, and access to information, training and incentives. This term was used by Lawler (1986) to describe management systems based on commitment and involvement as opposed to the bureaucratic model of leadership. He claimed that high involvement worked well because they acted as synergy and had a multiplicative effect.

Under this approach, workers are seen as partners in the enterprise whose interests are respected and have a voice on matters that concern them. This creates a climate of industrial democracies in which a continuing dialogue between managers and the members of their teams takes place in order to define expectations and share information on the organization's mission, vision, values and objectives. This means that the interests of both the employer and employees is protected hence promoting equity and fairness.

Employer – employee participation becomes crucial to ensure that the process of skill development is demand and output driven. There is need to provide an environment in which all the members of the organization can talk and act without fear or repercussion and this calls for giving credit where due thus placing a significance percentage of confidence in the employees.

By employee participation and involvement, the managers should be able to identify the skills and competencies for succession planning and this will support employee engagement by bridging the gap incase a senior member of the organization leaves. This in turn lead to reduction of the rate at which employees leave an organization because when employees feel that their decisions are valued they would not look forward to leaving their organizations easily.

Therefore, an organization which always engages their staff in all the day to day running of its activities is able to instill confidence and sense of belonging, promotes checks and balances on the management and workers thus improving communication and motivation which will translate to high productivity hence improving the organizational performance.

2.4.3 Staff Promotions

According to Dessler (2017) Promotions refer to advancements to positions of increased responsibility. It may also be defined as an upward/vertical advancement of an employee in an organization to other job commending greater responsibility, better pay, better status, prestige, higher opportunity and challenges, higher authority, better working environment, convenient working hours and facilities and higher ranks.

Gupta (2012) defined promotions as the advancement of the employee from a low job responsibility to take higher responsibilities of more status in an organization with an increased salary. It is a job with more prestige and income.

Sometimes people are promoted so as to be rewarded for exceptional performance while in other situations promotions are done in line with the succession planning so as to fill the open positions with tested and loyal employees. But sometimes promotion is not always a positive feeling for both the employer and the employee especially when the process is unfair, biased and secretive as this can diminish the effectiveness of the process for all the concerned. Thus, the need for development of a staff promotion selection criteria to effectively guide this process so that conflicts and lock outs are reduced.

Since staff promotions results to pay rises, the union voice plays a key factor to negotiate for better pay and objective promotions. The unions negotiate to ensure that equality and equity are put into consideration when promotional activities are out forth. This is because employees in these universities draw notions of unfairness and inequity in the exertion of effort and the remuneration of labour. Internal equity is not only important in its own right but can also foster economic efficiency and more effective human resource

management (Vance 2013)., hence the management of employees both individually and collectively remains a central feature of the organization's life.

This is associated to the economic influence on wage determination under conditions of perfectly and imperfectly competitive markets paid as a reward of a factor of production called labour should be put into consideration. Labour which is in terms of workers are usually found to be combining together to form trade unions for demanding higher wages and better working conditions from the entrepreneurs H.L Ahuja (2010).

A study by SRC (2018) revealed a high retention rate of 95 percent of employees in the public sector which was a result of job security, opportunities for growth and good work environment. A salary survey was also conducted which attributed high retention rate, good remuneration and attraction of employees in the public sector to the compensation and salary trends in their dispensation.

For organizations therefore to be adaptive to the changing and dynamic world of technological developments, the employees should have the capacity to handle the global competitiveness and meet the labour market demand and inspirations and thus the institutions need to create a base for capacity development of human resource that would constantly and objectively be subjected to retraining and access to technological learning within their working environments. This would in the future would contribute into diversification of activities in the economic sectors and also lead into productivity and profitability gains and thus brings into full realization of organizational overall performance.

According to the Marginal Productivity Theory of wages, the role played by trade unions and collective bargaining was entirely neglected. However, the emergence of

Institutional and Psychological Theories of wage determination under trade unions did not try to reconcile the marginal productivity theory of wages but instead assigned an eminent role to trade unions and collective bargaining in the wage determination. Through this theory, trade unions and collective bargaining do not enter through the back door but occupy central place right from the beginning in the determination of wages. These unions hence play a role in the bargaining approach

Since they are two types of promotional systems which are open and closed, an open promotion policy reduces conflicts and inequality at workplace because it considers all employees within the organization as potential candidates and also announces internally such vacancies hence recognizing employee performance and commitment and motivates them towards betterment of organizational performance. A carefully planned and organized promotion programme has four elements namely; formulation of promotion policy, identification of promotion channels, promotion appraisal, and centralized records. Therefore, organizations should develop well-articulated staff promotion policies and support lateral moves and encouraging staff to apply for other positions with higher responsibility as a healthy sign of a dynamic workplace. There should be active involvement of employee representatives so that they can minimize resistance from the other members of staff. By so doing improvements and alignments to staff career development will lead to increase in employee motivation and productivity.

The Competency Framework for Public Service (2018), elaborates the need to support career development which requires that regular tests to be administered to all employees by their relevant authorities as they move from one level of job group to another. By so

doing there is a surety that there are proper competencies for all cadres of employees in order to suit the changing labour demands brought about by globalization and digitization.

A recent third review salary cycle for the 2021/2022 - 2024/2025 on remuneration for the public sector by the SRC which recommended no review for basic salary structures, benefits, promotions and salary increases has a likelihood of destabilizing the labour market. This will have a negative impact on the organizational performance arising out of demotivated workforce thus decreased productivity and ultimately poor service delivery.

2.4.4 Employee Engagement

Rich *et al.* (2010: 619) describe the fully engaged employee in these terms: 'In engagement, organization members harness their full selves in active, complete work role performances by driving personal energy into physical, cognitive and emotional labours. Engaged individuals are described as being psychologically fully there, attentive, feeling, connected, integrated, and focussed in their role performances. They are open to themselves and others, connected to work, and focussed in their role performance'. The paper strongly argues that the relationship between work-life balance and job performance can be better connected by a mediating variable which represents a more holistic view of an individual.

Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch and Rhoades (2001) posted that employees' feeling an obligation at work is important as it compels them to repay advantageous treatment received from employer. Perceived organizational support concern the extent to which employees perceive that their contributions are valued by the organization while equity, fairness at workplace create necessary conditions for employee engagement. A

well-motivated workforce also tends to reciprocate the same to the organizational performance. Thus, organizations must strive to engage their employees for success hence enhancing staff motivation which would result to organizational performance.

According to the competency framework for the Public Service 2018, supervisory support is recognized as it defines the need for the supervisors who are at managerial level to effectively coach their subordinates to make decisions and manage them for results to harness and effectively improve on service delivery. It articulates the need for the supervisor to assign roles and responsibilities to team members for task and decision providing clear and constructive feedback which allows the team to be accountable for achieving results related to the responsibility areas. Supervisory support calls for improvement of employees when making decisions that affect them. This support can be articulated by also encouraging the employees and subordinates to set challenging goals.

Supervisors who constantly appreciate and reward achievement and effort enables the employees to remain engaged at workplace and therefore the chances of leaving and quitting work becomes rare. Supervisory support that genuinely values all staff members input and expertise promotes employee engagement. This support should also adopt the managerial ability of coaching and mentoring staff, the employees to want to serve for longer periods of time

To make or maintain their companies' profitability, leaders of companies must work hard to engage employees (Kortmann et al., 2014). The organizations' ability to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each employee, the employees find an easy time to handle what they are best in hence an improvement in the quality-of-service delivery thus improving productivity. This means that regular monitoring of the progress of the staff

members against the set standards and deadlines while at the same time discussing performance and feedbacks makes employees motivation improve thus reducing the turnover rate because they feel encouraged and appreciated at workplace. Truss et al (2013), on their study on employee engagement, organizational performance and individual well-being: exploring the evidence, developing the theory recognized that high levels of employee engagement are associated with high work performance and therefore organizations should look forward to embracing human resource practices that support this engagement.

For employees to remain engaged therefore, the supervisors should ensure that he actively leads and engages others in strategy, mission and vision formulation. This in the long run would reduce resistance to change because each staff member is inspired and empowered to give to their best of their abilities to achieve the desired objectives and results.

An engaged employee remains inspired and gains a sense of pride and passion in the role and responsibility undertaken if the supervisor actively leads by example where the leader supports their teams and employees and investing in their capabilities to be effective in the present roles and in the future roles. Employee engagement also calls for the supervisors to seek to understand colleagues and learn what motivates and keeps them fully engaged thus the building a strong personal impact on others.

Mentorship programmes also attributes to keeping the staff engaged all the time by encouraging delegated responsibility, proper classification of expectations and what is expected of them according the employees the autonomy in their important areas of their work.

2.5 Research Gaps

From the literature review Titi (2016) carried out a study on factors influencing the quality of service delivery in public universities in Kenya and the study only considered the variable of leadership, competitiveness and technologies and failed to show the influence that supervisory support would have on the quality of service delivery. Supervisory support was therefore found to be a contributing factor to improved quality service delivery in this study.

Femi (2014) studied on impact of communication on workers performance in selected universities in Nigeria did not factor the influence that employee voice to workers performance which was considered as an important factor of communication in this study.

Rashid, Hamza, & Said, (2018) study focused on the impacts of Rewards, Promotions and Supervisor Support on Academic Staff's Performance but ignored the aspect of communication and employee voice which was an area of focus for this study.

Thus, despite these studies trying to add value to the body of knowledge they were inexhaustive of all the employee relations practices that would influence organizations as well as public universities performance and thus the need for this study to focus on the practices left out by the scholars in order to fill in the knowledge gaps.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, descriptions of all the procedures used in the study were clearly stated. This assisted the researcher in understanding one's study, particularly where replication was desired. These procedures included: - research design, target population, Sample and Sampling Technique, Instruments, Data Collection Procedures, Pilot Test and data processing & analysis

3.1 Research design

Bryman and Bell (2007) defined research design as the structure that guides the execution of a research method, and the subsequent analysis of acquired data.

The researcher used use the quantitative and qualitative approach in presentation of the findings. Descriptive survey research design which is described as the research undertaken with an aim of describing characteristics of variables in a situation or community or groups (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2008) was employed. Questionnaires were administered with an aim of getting useful information which were analyzed and generalized to other Universities in Kenya.

3.2 Study Locale

This study was carried out in the seven public universities in Mount Kenya region. These universities were selected on the basis of their similar characteristics supported by various studies which were indicative of leadership styles, lack of supervisory support and lack of career growth as the major causes of employee turnover and dissatisfaction, Saverio (2018). Their huge, youthful and developing manpower, elaborate human resource system and well-established trade unions which assisted in responding to the research questions was also a factor to their selection. They were also chartered from the year 2013 and were part of the education reforms and hence had similar and unique characteristics and the findings of this study in these universities were to be generalized to the other public universities in other regions of Kenya.

3.3 Target population

The target universities population was 2984 employees both in teaching and non – teaching. The researcher also targeted human resource officers in each institution who fall under the category of non-teaching staff. (Mugenda &Mugenda, (2008) indicated that the target population is the population to which a researcher wants to generalize the results of a study. The proportion of the total population was done as per the tabulated below;

Table 3.1 Target Population

UNIVERSITY	STAFF POPULATION		
	Teaching staff	Non – teaching staff	Total
Meru University of Science and Technology	154	251	405
Chuka University	277	344	621
University of Embu	112	271	383

Dedan Kimathi University of Technology	137	250	387
Karatina University	144	260	404
Murang'a University of Technology	147	230	377
Kirinyaga University	140	267	407
Total	1111	1873	2984

Source: Commission for University Education; University statistics report (2018)

3.4 Sampling Procedures and sample size

For descriptive studies, ten percent or above of the target population was enough for this study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008), where time and resource allowed, a researcher should take as big sample as possible because this produces salient characteristics to an acceptable degree. Stratified random sampling was employed as well as purposive sampling which is useful when a limited category of people has the information that is sought was employed to the human resource officers. Respondents were limited to both teaching and non – teaching staff members who had diploma qualifications and above for the purpose of giving informed opinions. With recommendations of Mugenda & Mugenda (2008), an assumed sample size of 10% of target population would be sufficient for this study. However, this study generated a sample size guided by Israel (1992) formula derived a sample size of 271 teaching and non – teaching staff employees.

$$\frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{n_0 - 1}{N}}$$

Where N is the target population and n is the sample size and n_0 is the assumed sample before adjustment;

$$\text{Hence } \frac{298}{1 + \frac{298 - 1}{2984}} = 271 \text{ employees (teaching and non-teaching staff)}$$

Table 3.2 Sample size

	DESIGNATION	POPULATION	SAMPLE SIZE
Meru University of Science and Technology	Teaching staff	154	14
	Non – teaching staff	251	23
Chuka University	Teaching staff	277	26
	Non – teaching staff	344	30
University of Embu	Teaching staff	112	11
	Non – teaching staff	271	24
Dedan Kimathi University of Technology	Teaching staff	137	12
	Non – teaching staff	250	23
Karatina University	Teaching staff	144	13
	Non – teaching staff	260	24
Murang’a University of Technology	Teaching staff	147	13
	Non – teaching staff	230	21
Kirinyaga University	Teaching staff	140	13
	Non – teaching staff	267	24
Total		2984	271

3.5 Research instruments

The study adopted a structured questionnaire that was both open ended and closed ended in the collection of data from the respondents. The reason behind the use of a questionnaire was that it was able to collect more data compared to other instruments (Orodho, 2006).

A questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire was formulated by the researcher and distributed to the respondents in question. According to Berg and

Latin (1994), a questionnaire is the most suitable tool of collecting data. The researcher designed only one questionnaire and administered it to all the respondents because all of them were employees of these universities.

3.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted at South Eastern Kenya University to pretest the research instrument prior to actual data collection. This was done through the administration of 27 questionnaires to the respondents. According to (Mugenda & Mugenda (2008) 10% of the sample size is presumed to be reasonable in the conduction of the pilot study. The pilot pre - test established that the tool was reliable, however the results were not included in the main research project output.

3.6.1 Validity

According to Borg & Gall (1999), validity is the degree to which a test measures what is supposed to measure. Validity is therefore the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences are based on the research findings (Mugenda & Mugenda (2008). Coded validity of the data collection instrument was employed where an expert assisted in critiquing and checking the questionnaire to ensure that it was valid before the actual collection of data.

3.6.2 Reliability

Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trial (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008). Based on the study, the consistency of the research instrument was tested to determine the Cronbach's alpha which had a minimum threshold of 0.7.

3.7 Data collection procedure

The researcher used Likert scales and an open-ended questionnaire in the collection of data from the key respondents with relevant information from the public universities in Mount Kenya Region. The researcher involved an expert in generating a google form which was sent to the respondents via their emails and the response rate was 88.6% which met the threshold.

3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation

The quantitative and qualitative data obtained were analyzed and presented using bar graphs, tables and pie charts. Quantitative data was analyzed using the SPSS version 22 to generate information. This study employed both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis where descriptive analysis was used to summarize and graph the data so as to understand the specific set of objectives while inferential statistics was used to make inferences about the larger population from which the sample was drawn. The inferential statistics was specifically adopted to support the suitability of the regression of the regressions model as well as to check whether it satisfied the conditions set. The researcher used the multiple regression model below to fit the data.

3.8.1 Regression Model

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Y Performance of public universities

β_0 constant

$\beta_1 - \beta_3$ (coefficients)

X₁ employee voice (independent variable)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Types of Indicators variables</i>	<i>Measurement scale</i>	<i>Types of statistical analysis</i>
<i>Employee voice</i>	<i>Independent</i> i) Communication ii) Employee participation and involvement	i) Interval scale by use of a five-point Likert scale	i) Correlations analysis ii) Inferential statistical analysis iii) Regression analysis
<i>Staff promotions</i>	<i>Independent</i> i) Pay rises ii) Staff development	i) Likert scale ii) Open ended questions	i) Correlation analysis ii) Inferential statistical analysis iii) Regression analysis
<i>Employee engagement</i>	<i>Independent</i> Supervisory support	i) Likert scale ii) Open ended questions	i) Correlation analysis ii) Inferential statistical analysis iii) Regression analysis

X₂ staff promotion (independent variable)

X₃ employee engagement (independent variable)

ε Error term

3.9 Operationalization and measurement of study variable

The operationalization of variables refers to the study observations of each of independent and dependent variable. The operationalization of these variables is as depicted in table 4.1

Table 4.1 Operationalization and measurement of study variables

<i>Universities performance</i>	<i>Dependent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Increased student enrollment ii) Employee Retention iii) Employee job attendance rate iv) Employee efficiency in service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Likert scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Correlation analysis ii) Inferential statistical analysis iii) Regression analysis
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3.10 Logical and Ethical issues

The researcher was mindful of cultural, religious, gender and other significant differences within the research population in the planning, conducting and reporting of this research and also assured the respondents of the confidentiality and anonymity during the period of research. The researcher considered minimizing the use of research techniques that could have negative social consequences like internet and emails.

The researcher was sensitive to the integrity of ongoing institutional activities and alert on appropriate institutional representatives of possible disturbances in such activities, which would result from the conduct of the research.

The researcher communicated the findings and the practical significance of the research in clear, straightforward, and appropriate language to relevant research populations, institutional representatives, and other stakeholders.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the data analysis results, interpretation, and presentation. The study questionnaire was meant to study the influence of employee relations practices on performance of public universities in Mount Kenya Region. Findings on the objectives of the study were outlined. A chapter summary concluded this chapter.

4.2 Response Rate

Table 4.2 Response Rate.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Responded	240	88.6%
Did not respond	31	11.4%

Total	271	100%
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Table 4.2 above indicates the rate of responses of the 271 questionnaires administered which yielded a response rate of 88.6%.

The study involved seven (7) public universities in Mount Kenya region which were Meru University of Science and Technology, Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Karatina University, University of Embu, Kirinyaga University, Murang'a University of Technology and Chuka University where 271 questionnaires administered, 240 were returned. The overall response rate was thus found to be 88.6%. Mugenda & Mugenda (2008), states that a response of 50% is adequate, 60% is good, and above 70% to be very good. A study carried out by Muthoka (2016) on influence of employee relations practices on organizational performance of public health sector in Kenya yielded a response rate of 100% which she considered excellent. Thus, a response of 88.6% for this study was considered sufficient to proceed with the data analysis. This high response was as a result of advancement in technology through the use of Google forms and vigorous follow ups via emails and calls to the respondents.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics

This section discusses the demographics of the general information about the respondents.

This study found out that female respondents dominated the study with 57% while male were a minority with 43%. These results ascertained that there was consistency in the distributions which brought out the picture of diversity in gender distribution

and hence ensuring that the data collected was not distorted by this. There was also proper gender distribution as guided by the gender equality rule which require organizations to observe the two third gender rule.

4.3.1 Gender of the Respondents

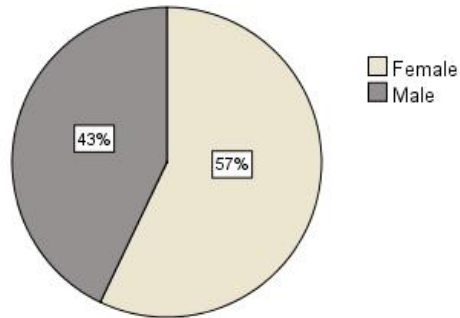


Figure 4.1 Gender of the respondents.

Gender of the respondents was examined, most of the participants were females (57%) while males recorded 43%.

4.3.2 Job Category of the Respondents

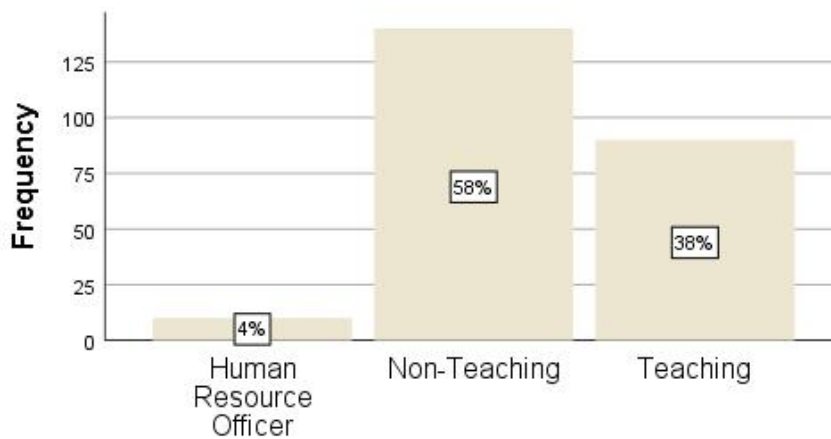


Figure 4.2 Job category

The respondents were asked to indicate job categories, as shown on Figure 4.2 majority of the respondents (58%) were non-teaching staff, followed by Teaching staff (38%), Human resource officers at (4%).

The study found out that there 62% of the respondents were non-teaching staff which were a combination of both the non-teaching staff and human resource officers. The study involved the human resource officers to check whether there would be more unique and distinctive mode of answering and the study found out that all the respondents both in the teaching and non-teaching category as well as human resources had proper and sufficient understanding of their working environment.

4.3.3 Age bracket of the Respondents

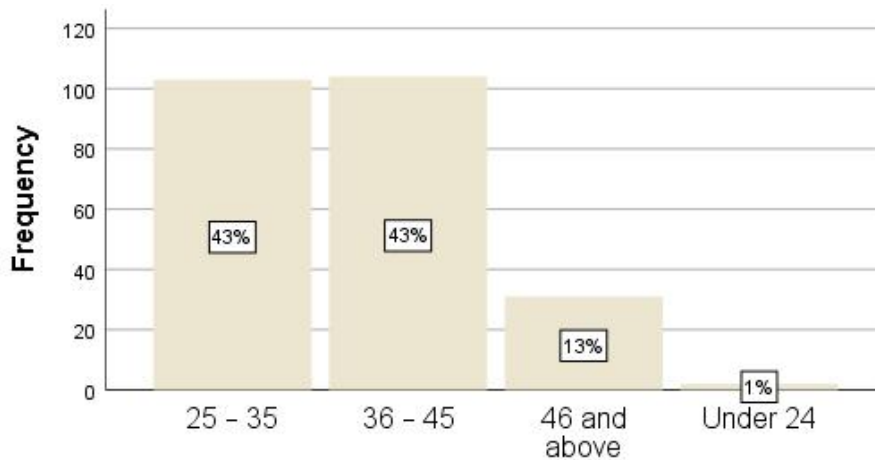


Figure 4.3 Age bracket category

The respondents were asked to indicate their age brackets categories, as shown on Figure 4.3 majority of the respondents (43%) were between 36 to 45 years, tied with respondents (43%) who aged between 25 to 35 years, followed by those who aged above 45 years (13%), under 24 aged respondents were represented at (1%). The implication of the aging workforce of 46 years and above which accounted for 46%

which majorly was composed of those who were senior lecturers and professors would also pose a major challenge if the young and youthful employees' capacity was not developed as it would create a gap in terms of succession to quality teaching. This concurred with the findings of the Commission for University Education (2018) which found out that there very few senior lecturers and professors and if this trend was not curbed, there would be a gap in the research and capacity to provide quality teaching.

The study found out that most of these universities' respondents were aged between 25 and 45. Thus most of these respondents were in their productive stage they felt that there was need for their organizations to put in proper mechanisms to take care of career growth and development, work life balance since most of them were still pursuing further studies and as well as be rewarded appropriately.

4.3.4 Level of education

Table 4.3 Highest level of education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
Degree	88	36.7
Degree; CPA Finalist	1	0.4
Diploma	22	9.2
Diploma; CPA finalist	1	0.4
Diploma; Masters	1	0.4
Masters	102	42.5
Masters; CHRP Professional and IHRM Certified	1	0.4
Masters; CPA finalist	1	0.4

Ph.D	23	9.6
Total	240	100.0

The findings indicated on table 4.3 showed that most of the respondents 42.5 % in the study had attained master’s degree, this was followed by 36.7% respondents with a degree and 9.2% had diploma qualifications. The findings implied that most employees in these universities had minimum basic education from diploma qualifications and above and hence the ability to attend to all the questions and there was no need for research assistants to interpret the questions for them.

The study also found out that the university employees with PhD qualification called for only 9.6% as compared to those with masters qualification which had 43% meaning that the senior teaching faculty who should guide doctoral students was at the least. This study concurred with the findings of CUE 2018 which concluded that a majority of 55% of academic staff had masters level of education while PhD holders accounted for only 36% which was to translate to a serious implication in terms of academic leaders to run academic staff. This gap would ultimately have an effect on quality of teaching and research in universities and decline in the performance of public universities in Mount Kenya region.

4.3.5 Length of service

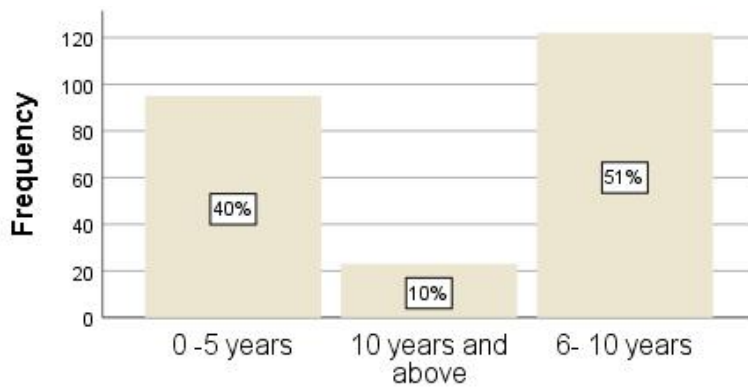


Figure 4.4 length of service

Figure 4.4 indicates that the most of the respondents 51% in the study had worked in the institution for a period of 6 to 10 years, this was followed by 40% of the respondents who has worked for 0 to 5 years. 10% of the respondents had worked for a period of more than 10 years.

This study established that most of the university had worked for their institutions for 6 - 10 years. This reason for this was as a result of these universities being chartered from the year 2013. Thus, most of those employees had not left their universities to seek for greener pastures. This study found out that there was low employee turnover by the employees which could have resulted due to job security and availability of opportunities for growth.

The study found out also that the few respondents accounting for 10% were the starters of the universities who had seen the universities grow to the current state and were very experienced.

However, following the 40% of respondents who had worked for less than five years was a contribution of the government freeze on recruitment which saw these

universities halt employment of new personnel. This in the long run would lead to these universities capacity to handle the globalization trends hampered.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Variables

4.4.1 Employee Voice

Table 4.4 Employee voice

Employee Voice	N	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
[There exists a trade union in my organization]	240	0	0	0.8	44.2	55	4.542	0.516
[Employees are victimized due to their involvement to a trade union strike]	240	1.3	55	13.8	29.2	0.8	2.733	0.926

Table 4.4 Employee voice

[Employees are considered important in decision-making process]	240	0.8	8.8	9.2	77.1	4.2	3.750	0.706
[Employees have a formal complaint process in the organization]	240	0.4	6.3	3.8	85	4.6	3.871	0.596
[Employees are able to discuss operational issues in an open, frank, and constructive manner]	240	1.7	8.3	6.3	80.8	2.9	3.750	0.717
[Employees maintain rapport relationship with each other and are willing to share all information]	240	0	2.5	3.8	90.8	2.9	3.942	0.405

[Service delivery has gradually improved in the recent past leading to increased student enrolment]	240	0	1.7	6.3	87.5	4.6	3.950	0.416
[Employees can freely discuss job-related issues with their supervisors.]	240	0	4.6	6.7	87.1	1.7	3.858	0.498
[Employee have right to take necessary actions on their particular jobs related problems]	240	0.4	3.3	13.8	80	2.5	3.808	0.546
<i>composite</i>							3.800	0.592

Respondents were asked to rate employee voice on a scale of 1 to 5 where **1-Strongly Agree, 2- Agree, 3- Neutral, 4- Disagree and 5 - Strongly Disagree**. Mean and standard deviation were then computed for the variable as given in Table 4.3. The overall aggregate mean score for Employee voice was 3.800 and SD=0.592. The statement “There exists a trade union in my organization” had highest mean score (mean= 4.542 and SD=0.516). The statement “Employees are victimized due to their involvement to a trade union strike” had lowest mean score (mean= 2.733 and SD=0.926).

From the findings, the representation of the employees by union domineered resulting to 99.2 % which revealed that employees concerns, interests and complaints were better handled by their unions. Thus the power of the unions led to a reduction in victimization of the members who were involved in strikes which accounted to the least mean score of 2.733, the study also found out that more than 80% of the respondents were highly involved in decision making hence employees found themselves committed to the organizational goals which influenced their motivational level hence improving the overall organizational performance. This study findings on the importance of having a

formal complaint and communication procedure concurred with the findings of Elendu, V.C. (2018) which concluded that employees give importance to employers for their communication procedures that affect their efficiency and motivational level.

The study also found out that there was a significant increase of 92% in student enrolment as a result of improved service delivery which was contributed by the high involvement of the respondents in the operational decisions. 88% of the respondents also were found to freely discuss their job related issues with their supervisors hence concurring with the findings of Odhong,A,. &Omollo, J. (2014) which found out that free communication and information flow led to improved organization performance. There was also evidence of well-maintained relationship between employees and this resulted to 93% which also replicated to enhanced service delivery and ultimately increase in enrolment.

4.4.2 Staff Promotion

Table 4.5 Staff Promotion

Staff Promotion	N	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
[Promotion is available in the organization]	240	2.5	5.8	5.4	65.4	20.8	3.963	0.850
[Employees have a well-defined career ladder]	240	2.1	32.9	10.4	52.9	1.7	3.192	0.988
[Equal opportunity is available for each employee for promotion]	240	2.9	42.5	19.2	32.9	2.5	2.896	0.982
[Organization process/product quality has improved last three years.]	240	0.8	4.2	10	82.9	2.1	3.813	0.573

[Organizational processes have become more efficient and effective]	240	0.4	5.8	10.4	78.3	5	3.817	0.627
[Promotions reduces absenteeism at workplace]	240	1.7	2.1	5.4	82.9	7.9	3.933	0.603
[Performance matches the benefits received at workplace]	240	3.3	14.6	19.6	60.4	2.1	3.433	0.884
Composite							3.578	0.787

Table 4.6 Qualitative analysis of open-ended questions on forms of promotions

Question	Summary of the main themes
Indicate the most common forms of promotions available in your organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Majority of the respondents agreed that promotion was available except seven (7) who felt there were no promotions. ● Vertical and dry promotions were termed as the most applied forms of promotions in the organizations. ● Horizontal promotions were only tied to 13 respondents

Respondents were asked to rate staff promotion on a scale of 1 to 5 where **1-Strongly Agree, 2- Agree, 3- Neutral, 4- Disagree and 5 - Strongly Disagree**. Mean and standard deviation were then computed for the variable as given in Table 4.4. The overall aggregate mean score for staff promotion was 3.578 and SD=0.787. The statement

“Promotion is available in the organization” had the highest mean score (mean= 3.578 and SD=0.850). The statement “Equal opportunity is available for each employee for promotion” had the lowest mean score (mean= 2.896 and SD=0.988).

The study found out that promotion was available in the organization with 86%. The most applicable form of promotion was found out to be both dry and vertical as per the qualitative analysis of the open-ended question. While some workers are motivated by financial incentives others thought that non-financial incentives like recognition and other forms of rewards played part in improving organization performance. While most respondents 53% in the teaching category revealed that their institutions had a well-defined career ladder which was due to the presence of the Ministry of Education guidelines, majority of the non-teaching staff felt that this was missing as indicated by a percentage of 45. Whereas also promotions were available, the study found out that equal opportunities were not available to employees as evidenced by 64% while those who felt that the equal opportunities accounted for only 35%. Results from the qualitative approach indicated that there most of opportunities were union driven which were found to favour most of the teaching fraternity. Rashid, Hamza & Said (2018) in their study on impact of rewards, promotions and supervisor support found out that seeking for promotions motivates better workers to retain and participate in human capital and also that for better performance to be obtained it called for greater promotions and vice versa. The study also found out that the quality of organizational processes as well as them being efficient was realized as denoted by a percentage of more than 80.

The levels of absenteeism were also lowered due to the presence of promotions and this accounted to a majority of 90% agreeing to it. The study also found out that 62% of

respondents felt that their performance matched with the benefits they received while 37% disagreed to it.

4.4.3 Employee Engagement

Table 4.7 Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement	N	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
[Employees have a sense of belonging and commitment to the organization.]	240	0	6.7	6.3	53.3	33.8	4.142	0.806

Table 4.7 Employee Engagement

[Employees can fully utilize their knowledge and skills in the organization]	240	0	5	4.2	86.3	4.6	3.904	0.529
[Your organization strongly considers your goals and values]	240	0.8	9.2	7.5	78.8	3.8	3.754	0.704
[Your organization shows little concern for its employees]	240	1.3	62.1	16.7	18.8	1.3	2.567	0.851
[Your organization culture fosters a comfortable and supportive work environment]	240	0.8	10.8	13.8	72.5	2.1	3.642	0.735
[You can work with your organization for up to retirement]	240	2.9	20.8	38.8	33.3	4.2	3.150	0.898
[Management exercises	240	0.8	3.8	34.6	59.6	1.3	3.567	0.630

delegation of authority to
employees]

Composite

3.532

0.736

Table 4.8 Qualitative analysis of other areas of employee engagement that could guide further research

Question	Summary of the main themes
Other areas of employee engagement for further research	Majority of the respondents suggested the following as areas of further research; i) Flexible working arrangements, ii) reward and recognition, iii) Continuous training, iv) work place health and safety, v) Work life balance

Respondents were asked to rate Employee Engagement on a scale of 1 to 5 where **1- Strongly Agree, 2- Agree, 3- Neutral, 4- Disagree and 5 - Strongly Disagree**. Mean and standard deviation were then computed for the variable as given in Table 4.5. The overall aggregate mean score for Employee Engagement was 3.532 and SD=0.736. The statement “Employees have a sense of belonging and commitment to the organization” had the highest mean score (mean= 4.142 and SD=0.806). The statement “Your organization shows little concern for its employees” had the lowest mean score (mean= 2.567 and SD=0.851).

The findings of this study indicated that 89% of the respondents had a sense of belonging and commitment to their organizations while 90% also felt that they were able to fully utilize their knowledge and skills. The study also revealed that proper delegation of duties and responsibilities was well handled accounting to 60% agreeing to this. These findings concur with a study on the role of employee engagement in the relationship between job design and task performance by Amanda, et al,(2013) which found out that if organizations ensure that jobs provides individuals with variety, significance, autonomy and feedback then people will become more engaged at work, leading to positive performance outcome and low defiance levels. The study also revealed that most organization strongly considered their employees goals and values and had a lot of concern for them. This accounted for more than 80%.

While the study found out that 37% of the respondents would work with their organizations upto retirement, 38% were not sure while 21% felt that they could not. Thus, for the organizations to be able to retain their workers and be convinced to work for longer, there was therefore need to create proper mechanisms to ensure that highly experienced workers desired to stay with their organizations.

4.4.4 Organizational performance

Table 4.9 Organization performance

Organizational performance	N	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
[Student enrolment has increased overtime]	240	1.3	0.4	1.3	45.8	51.3	4.454	0.671
[Customer feedback has improved the quality of services rendered]	240	0	2.1	2.5	88.3	7.1	4.004	0.424

[Team work influences creation of new universities academic programmes]	240	0	0.4	2.9	82.5	14.2	4.104	0.421
[Promotion schemes influence employee retention]	240	0.4	0.8	1.3	81.7	15.8	4.117	0.479
[High work engagement practices reduces employee turnover]	240	0.4	3.3	4.2	79.6	12.5	4.004	0.582

Table 4.9 Organization performance

[Employees exceed pre-determined target by their managers]	240	0.4	3.8	33.3	57.9	4.6	3.625	0.654
Composite							4.051	0.538

Respondents were asked to rate organizational Performance on a scale of 1 to 5 where **1- Strongly Agree, 2- Agree, 3- Neutral, 4- Disagree and 5 - Strongly Disagree**. Mean and standard deviation were then computed for the variable as given in Table 4.6. The overall aggregate mean score for organizational performance was 4.538 and SD=0.538. The statement “Student enrolment has increased overtime” had the highest mean score (mean= 4.454 and SD=0.671). The statement “Employees exceed pre-determined target by their managers” had the lowest mean score (mean= 3.625 and SD=0.654).

The study found out that student enrolment had increased scoring a 97.1% which resulted from worker’s participation and involvement in the development of curricula and improved customer feedback which led the university’s popularity hence attracting a larger number of both regular and self-sponsored students. Another contributing factor was as a result of having a high number of skilled employees since more than 50% of

them had masters and above. This in turn resulted to the ability of these universities to offer quality services which led to increased enrolment. With increased enrolment, the universities are able to increase their income which would translate to better pay, promotions and improved working conditions for their employees.

The findings of this study realized a retention rate of 92% arose as a result employing high work engagement practices which also agreed to a study by SRC (2018) which revealed a high retention rate of 95% in the public sector which was a result of job security and good working environment. This study also revealed that the employees who left the organizations accounted for only 7.9% which was relatively low compared to the number that stayed longer with their universities.

It was also quite evident that team work influenced the increase of academic programmes which amounted to increase in the number of students who enrolled for the courses in these institutions.

4.5 Inferential Statistics of Variables

4.5.1 Diagnostic tests

Test for Multicollinearity

Table 4.10: Multicollinearity

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)		
Employee Voice	0.715	1.398
Staff Promotion	0.756	1.323

 a. Dependent Variable: Organizational performance

Multicollinearity is the undesirable situation where the correlations among the independent variables are strong. Tolerance of a respective independent variable is calculated from $1 - R^2$. A tolerance with a value close to 1 means there is little multicollinearity, whereas a value close to 0 suggests that multicollinearity may be a threat (Belsley, Kuh & Welsch, 2004). The reciprocal of the tolerance is known as Variance Inflation Factor (VIF).

Table 4.10 indicates the test results for multicollinearity, using both the VIF and tolerance. With VIF values being less than 5, it was concluded that there was no presence of multicollinearity in this study. The VIF shows us how much the variance of the coefficient estimate is being inflated by multicollinearity.

4.5.2 Test for Heteroscedasticity

Table 4.11 Breusch-Pagan and Koenker test statistics and sig-values

	LM	Sig
BP	1.388	.708
Koenker	1.353	.717

Heteroscedasticity happens when the variance of the errors varies across observations (Long & Ervin, 1998). When the errors are heteroscedastic, the OLS estimator remains unbiased, but becomes inefficient, and essentially, the usual procedures for hypothesis testing are no longer appropriate. In this study the Breusch-Pagan test was used to test for heteroscedasticity. Table 4.11 shows the result of *hettest* by use of the Breusch-Pagan test. A large chi-square value, greater than 9.21 (Sazali et al., 2009), would indicate that

heteroscedasticity was present. In this study, the chi-square value was small, that is, 1.388, indicating heteroscedasticity was not a problem.

4.5.3 Test for Normality

Table 4.12 Test for Normality of Variables

Variables	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Employee Voice	.989	240	.064
Staff Promotion	.993	240	.319
Employee Engagement	.990	240	.097
Organization Performance	.995	240	.662

Shapiro Wilk test is a robust test for normality that generates a p value that indicates whether the probability estimation follows normal distribution. Shapiro Wilk test is performed on all the all predictors and the dependent constructs. The test concludes that data is normal if the p-value are not less than .05 (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965). Table 4.12 indicates that the significance levels of all the variables were more than .05, which is a clear indication that all the variables were normally distributed and therefore other statistical analysis would be carried out on the data.

4.5.4 Reliability Analysis

Table 4.13 Reliability of the Study Variables

Variables	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Employee Voice	9	0.791
Staff Promotion	7	0.764

Employee Engagement	7	0.818
Organizational performance	6	0.707
Overall	29	0.843

Scale reliability for study variables was determined by computing the overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the items of Employee Engagement, Staff Promotion, Employee Voice and organizational Performance. The reliability was demonstrated since the overall Cronbach's alpha statistic for Employee voice, staff promotion, Employee engagement and organizational Performance were 0.791, 0.764, 0.818 and 0.705 respectively which were greater than the threshold value of 0.7 as indicated in table 4.13.

4.5.5 Correlation of Variables

Table 4.14 Correction Matrix

		Organizational performance	Employee Voice	Staff Promotion	Employee Engagement
Organizational performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.636**	.551**	.534**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	240	240	240	240
Employee Voice	Pearson Correlation	.636**	1	.388**	.504**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	240	240	240	240
Staff Promotion	Pearson Correlation	.551**	.388**	1	.460**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	240	240	240	240

	N	240	240	240	240
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.534**	.504**	.460**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	240	240	240	240

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

The output in table 4.14 indicate that Employee Voice had a strong positive relationship with Organizational performance ($r=.636$, $p<0.05$). Staff promotion had a positive relationship with organizational performance ($r=.551$, $p<0.05$). The correlation between Employee engagement and organizational performance was positive and significant ($r=.534$, $p<0.05$).

4.5.6 Regression analysis.

Table 4.15 Joint Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.731 ^a	0.535	0.529		0.18292

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Engagement, Staff Promotion, Employee Voice

The R^2 for the regression model between Employee Engagement, Staff Promotion, Employee Voice and organizational performance was 0.535 meaning that the joint effect of Employee Engagement, Staff Promotion and Employee Voice explain 53.5 % variation in the organizational performance while the remaining variation is explained by the error term.

The regression model was a good fit as indicated by a significant Fstatistic ($F=90.415$ $p<0.05$).

Table 4.16 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.076	3	3.025	90.415	.000 ^b
	Residual	7.897	236	0.033		
	Total	16.973	239			

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Engagement, Staff Promotion, Employee Voice

The regression model obtained from the output was

$$\text{Operformance} = .233 + .364 \text{ Evoice} + .148 \text{ Spromo} + .119 \text{ Eengage} + \text{error}$$

Table 4.17 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0.233	0.091		2.569	0.011
	Employee Voice	0.364	0.045	0.428	8.159	0.000
	Staff Promotion	0.148	0.025	0.303	5.934	0.000
	Employee Engagement	0.119	0.036	0.279	3.277	0.001

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational performance

The regression coefficient for Employee Voice was positive and significant (B=.364, $p < .05$), this indicates that a unit increase in Employee Voice would result in 36.4% increase in organizational performance. The regression coefficient for staff promotion was positive and significant (B=.148, $p < .05$), this indicates that a unit increase in staff promotion would result in 14.8% increase in organizational performance. The regression coefficient for Employee engagement was positive and significant (B=.119, $p < .05$), this

indicates that a unit increase in employee engagement would result in 11.9% increase in organizational performance.

The constant of the regression equation implied that organizational performance had a constant of 2.33 which meant that the dependent variables are deemed to change by 2.33 holding all other factors constant. Thus, for the three independent variables of employee voice, staff promotions and employee engagement it meant that holding all other factors constant there was a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable of performance which had a value of 0.000.

The beta coefficients indicate the relative importance of each independent variable (Employee Engagement, Staff Promotion and Employee Voice) in influencing the dependent variable (Organizational performance)

Employee Voice is the most important in influencing Organizational performance ($\beta=0.428$) followed by staff promotion ($\beta=0.303$) and the least is Employee Engagement ($\beta=0.279$).

4.6 Chapter Summary

This Chapter analyses the influence of employee relations practices on performance of public universities in Mount Kenya Region. The chapter concludes by showing that Employee Engagement, Staff Promotion and Employee Voice are significantly and positively related to the performance of public universities in Mount Kenya Region.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND PUBLICATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presented a summary of the study findings, conclusions and the recommendations of areas of further research to policy makers. The general objective of this study was to establish the influence that employee relations practices had on performance of public universities in the Mount Kenya Region. The study sought to assess how employee voice influenced performance of public universities in the Mount Kenya Region, determine how the staff promotions influenced performance in public Universities in the Mount Kenya Region and to establish how employee engagement influenced performance of public Universities in the Mount Kenya Region.

5.2 Summary of Main Findings

5.2.1 Employee Voice

The study established that employee voice was the most positive significant variable that influenced the performance of public universities in Mount Kenya region. This was

evidenced by a regression coefficient of (B=0.364) which meant that a unit increase in employee voice would result to 36.4% increase in organizational performance. This was attributed to the fact that most workers belonged to a union. However, there was an indication that workers were usually victimized due to their involvement in trade union strikes. This study therefore established the need for proper mechanisms put in place so as to protect the rights of the workers when involved in strike activities. The unions therefore should ensure protections of workers' rights either by employing other conflict resolution mechanisms like mediation or arbitration. These findings are supported by a study by Odhong' *et all* (2014) that found out that organizations which allow free flow of information and communication promotes employee relations thus improving work performance.

The study therefore established that there was a very strong positive relationship with organizational performance.

5.2.2 Staff Promotions

The study established staff promotions was positive and significant with a regression coefficient of (B=0.148) which indicated that a unit increase in staff promotion led to a 14% increase in organizational performance. Promotions was available in the organization however the study established that there was not defined career ladder and equal employee opportunities were

not available to all employees thus affecting organizational performance. This meant that if the organizations were able to exercise fairness and equity in their promotions, the absenteeism levels would reduce and organizational processes would become more efficient thus improving the overall organizational performance.

Findings from the qualitative analysis on staff promotions revealed that dry promotions had a higher frequency of 98, followed by vertical promotions with a frequency of 37 and horizontal promotions had the least frequency. These findings indicated there was need for the management of the organization to have a clear promotion policy so as to increase employee morale which would ultimately improve organizational performance.

These findings concur with the study findings of Ng'ethe (2014) which found out that undefined career development policies were a contributing factor to employee turnover.

5.2.3 Employee Engagement

The study found out that correlation between employee engagement and organizational performance was positive and significant with an $r=0.534$. Employees having a sense of belonging and commitment to the organization directly influenced the rate at which employees worked with their organizations.

The study revealed that organizations had employees concerns and interests at heart and therefore employees felt confident to work with the organizations for longer periods of time. This was evidenced by the length of service by employees which found out that 51% of them had worked for a period of 10 years which could be the contributing factor to low employee turnover. However, there was need for the managers to coach and mentor their staff if they would wish the employees to serve the organizations for longer periods of time.

These findings concur with the findings of Kortmann et al., (2014) which found out that if there is clarity in roles and responsibilities, employees would find it easy to deliver to their level best and improve quality of service delivery and this would lead to improved productivity.

Further the study carried out a qualitative analysis on other areas of employee's engagement that the respondents felt would have an impact on organizational performance. The study found out that factors like flexible working arrangements, reward and recognition, continuous training, work place health and safety and work life balance could impact on organizational performance.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the study findings, the study made various conclusions on the influence of employee relations practices on organization performance.

First, on the influence of employee voice on organizational performance the study concluded that communication played a vital role in enhancing relationships which ultimately resulted to teamwork and consequently improved performance. Employee participation and involvement in the organizational process was found out to play a big role in improving quality and enhancing student enrolment in the universities.

Secondly, the influence of staff promotions on organizational performance was found to be positive and significant and hence the study concluded that the presence of both financial and non-financial incentives as well as clearly established career development plan played a vital role in improving the efficiency of the organizational processes which improved product quality thus the positive results in organizational performance. It also concluded that the level of absenteeism had minimized which meant high productivity thus timely service delivery which in turn led to improved corporate image.

Lastly, on the influence of employee engagement practices on organizational performance, the relationship was positive and significant. The study concluded that high

work engagement and involvement practices created a sense of belonging to the employees thus leading to a high retention rate. Thus the employees felt the need to work hard and focused to the role performance. Organizational supervisory support was found to make employees valued by the organizations and hence replicating the same toward organizational performance.

5.4 Recommendations from the Study

The study found that employee voice had the strongest and positive relationship with organizational performance. Owing to this, the study recommends that organizations respect employee voice and where conflicts arise other conflict mechanisms should be put in place to enhance good labour relations. The study also recommends to the management of these universities to work towards improving communication structures and procedures so as to allow free flow of information which will enhance decision making thus avoiding delays in the operational processes. By encouraging two-way dialogue therefore, weaknesses, strengths and areas of interests are identified and this is highly supported through the maintenance of an open, effective communication and ongoing encouragement. It also recommends to the management to treat their employees as their partners by highly involving them in all operational issues.

The study also recommends to the management of these universities to ensure that the process of promotion is fair and unbiased by putting in place well-articulated staff promotion policies having actively involved the union representatives which would minimize resistance, conflicts and lock outs. The study also recommends that the management of the universities to support staff development in terms of their career and growth as it is mandated by the philosophy of human resource management. They should

also embrace career planning and development because it clarifies the match between the organizational and employee goals. It also calls for creation of programs for employees so as to provide skill development such as coaching, rotation of jobs as well as introducing career strategy groups to support this.

Since there was a positive and significant relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance, this study recommends to the management the need to strive to highly engage their employees for success by cultivating participatory supervisory support. This calls for proper delegation mechanisms which will harness employees to their full selves in active and complete work roles.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Research

While this study sought to find out the relationship between employee voice, staff promotions and employee engagement practices and their influence on organizational performance, there is need for further areas of employee relations practices to be researched on. This study sought for opinions from the respondents who suggested that other studies would look in to other practices like flexible working arrangements, reward and recognition, continuous training, work place health and safety and work life balance within the same region or outside Mount Kenya region.

Since this study examined universities in Mount Kenya region which had not operated for more than 15 years, similar research could be done in older public universities as well as in private universities in other regions of Kenya so as to check whether the same results would be realized.

5.6 Title of the Publication

Miriam, Kubaison, Rita (2022). Influence of Employee Relations Practices on Organizational Performance in Public Universities in Mt. Kenya Region. The International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 10 (4). pp. 2204-034. ISSN 2321-9203

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APPENDIX I: INTRODUCTION LETTER

Miriam Wanderi

P.O. Box 972 - 60200, Meru

Meru University of Science and Technology

17/02/2021

Dear Respondent,

RE: RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

I am a student at Meru University of Science and Technology doing research on influence of employee relations practices on organization performance in the public universities in Mount .Kenya Region. This is in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the university to the award of a degree in Maters of Business Administration (Human Resource) option. The information you provide will only be used for academic purposes only. Your participation is voluntary since it's an academic study hence there will be no form of reward.

I am glad to inform you that you are one of the randomly selected participants for this study. I humbly request you to provide me with the information requested in the questionnaire provided. Your confidentiality and anonymity is highly regarded and shall be held with respect.

Thank you in advance for your participation and assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Miriam Wanderi
BS401/5606/17

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE

Data Collection Questionnaire

This research seeks to study the influence of employee relations practices on organizational performance in public universities in Mount Kenya Region. To achieve this objective, relevant questions have been provided to gather data for analysis. Kindly spare some time to provide the requested information as accurately as possible. Please note that information given will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with strict confidence.

Please respond to each item by ticking appropriately or giving a brief explanation in the blank space provided.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Name of your institution (please tick appropriately)

- a) Meru University of Science and Technology
- b) University of Embu
- c) Chuka University
- d) Dedan Kimathi University of Technology
- e) Karatina University
- f) Murang'a University of Technology
- g) Kirinyaga University

2. Indicate your job category
- a) Teaching
 - b) Non-Teaching
 - c) Human Resource Officer
3. Indicate your gender
- a) Male
 - b) Female
4. Age bracket category
- a) Under 24
 - b) 25 – 35
 - c) 36 – 45
 - d) 46 and above
5. The highest academic qualifications
- a) A Level
 - b) Diploma
 - c) Degree
 - d) Masters
 - e) Ph.D
 - f) Others
- (specify)
-
-
6. How long have you worked for the institution
- a) 0-5 years

b) 6- 10 years

c) 10 years and above

SECTION B: EMPLOYEE VOICE AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning employee voice in relation to organizational performance? Please tick as appropriate.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
There exists a trade union in my organization					
Employees are victimized due to their involvement to a trade union strike					
Employees are considered important in decision-making process					
Employees have a formal complaint process in the organization					
Employees are able to discuss operational issues in an open, frank, and constructive manner					
Employees maintain rapport relationship with each other and are willing to share all information					
Service delivery has gradually improved in the recent past leading to increased student enrolment					

Employees can freely discuss job-related issues with their supervisors.					
Employee have right to take necessary actions on their particular jobs related problems					

SECTION C: STAFF PROMOTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning staff promotions at workplace in relation to organizational performance? Please tick as appropriate.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Promotion is available in the organization.					
Employees have a well-defined career ladder					
Equal opportunity is available for each employee for promotion					
Organization process/product quality has improved last three years.					
Organizational processes have become more efficient and effective					
Promotions reduces absenteeism at workplace					
Performance matches the benefits received at workplace					

Please indicate the most common forms of promotion available in your organization;

1:.....

2. :.....

3. :.....

SECTION D: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree please tick appropriately on how you would rate the influence of employee engagement on organizational performance

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Employees have a sense of belonging and commitment to the organization.					
Employees can fully utilize their knowledge and skills in the organization.					
Your organization strongly considers your goals and values					
Your organization shows little concern for its employees					
Your organization culture fosters a comfortable and supportive work environment					
You can work with your organization for upto retirement					
Management exercises delegation of authority to					

employees					
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Kindly point out other areas of employee engagement that in your view are likely to influence organizational performance that can guide future research

1.
2.
3.
4.

SECTION E: ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

This section contains statements pertaining organizational performance in regard to the real output as measured against its projected objectives. Using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, please tick appropriately;

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Student enrolment has increased overtime					
Customer feedback has improved the quality of services rendered					
Team work influences creation of new universities academic programmes					
Promotion schemes influence employee retention					
High work engagement practices reduces employee turnover					

Employees exceed pre-determined target by the managers					
--	--	--	--	--	--

APPENDIX III: PUBLICATION