

An Evaluation of the Role of Teamwork on Employee Performance at Machakos County Government, Kenya

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to evaluate the role of teamwork on employee performance at Machakos county government, Kenya. This study follows a related study conducted by the author on perceived effects of employee training on employee performance at Machakos county government, Kenya, where the author concluded the study by recommending that similar studies could be conducted to evaluate the role of teamwork on employee performance in the county government of Machakos, Kenya. This study could be significant to the county government of Machakos in understanding the role of teamwork on employee performance in the organization. Other researchers could also find the study to be significant when conducting literature review for related studies. A descriptive research design was used in this study. The target population was 1,300 employees of Machakos county government, Kenya. Stratified random sampling technique was used to group the population into strata as per the different departments in the county government of Machakos, Kenya. The study adopted a questionnaire for data collection because of its effectiveness in capturing confidential information and its efficiency in collecting data from a relatively large sample. The questionnaire was developed using a five point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to evaluate the role of teamwork in their performance at the county government of Machakos. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics through the application of SPSS software. The findings revealed that teamwork plays a key role on employee performance at Machakos county government, Kenya, with majority of the employee revealing that teamwork plays a positive role in their performance. The author recommends that organizations should encourage employees to work in teams by developing a conducive environment for teamwork to prevail. Teamwork should also be rewarded because no employee is an island and there is strength in unity brought about by teamwork.

Keywords: Employee Performance; Teamwork

Introduction

Job performance has been defined as the overall expected value from employees' behaviors carried out over the course of a set period of time (Motowidlo, Borman & Schmidt, 1997). Borman and Motowidlo (1993) states that Performance can further be broken down into two distinct types: Task Performance: These are the actions that contribute to transforming raw materials to goods and services, the things that are typically included in job descriptions. Examples include selling clothes, drilling holes or teaching a class. Contextual Performance: These are the behaviors that contribute to overall effectiveness through supporting the social and psychological climate of the workplace. Examples include cooperating with teammates, diffusing conflicts and cleaning up the conference room (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993).

Scarnati (2001) defines teamwork as a cooperative process that allows ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results. According to Delarue (2003) it is difficult to arrive at a single definition of teamwork. Several concepts exist and researchers in the field of working conditions differ in their view of what teamwork actually means. The general meaning of team is groups of persons who have at least some collective tasks and where the team members are authorized to regulate mutually the execution of these collective tasks (Bernardin, 2006).

1.1 Research Objective

The objective of the study was to evaluate the role of teamwork on employee performance at Machakos county government, Kenya.

1.2 Value of the Study

Information from the study could be used by the county government of Machakos, Kenya to understand the role of teamwork on employee performance. The county government of Machakos could also find the study useful in developing the necessary policies to encourage teamwork in the organization. Other researchers conducting related studies in future may also benefit from the study through literature review.

1. Literature Review

Marks, Mathieu and Zaccaro (2001) define teamwork as team members' interdependent acts that convert inputs to outcomes through cognitive, verbal and behavioral activities directed toward organizing task work to achieve collective goals. Harris and Harris (1996) argue that a team has a common goal or purpose where team members can develop effective mutual relationships to achieve team goals. Teamwork helps to promote deep learning that occurs through interaction, problem solving, dialogue, cooperation and collaboration (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Teamwork affects employee performance according to Aichouni (2005). Aichouni (2005) opines that both profit and non-profit making organizations are finding teamwork very important in their operations and especially in employee performance and the overall performance of the organizations. Many organizations have established the culture of teamwork in order to operate with high quality, speed and to be more economical in their operations.

According to Aichouni (2005), man is unable to live on his efforts alone and he therefore requires the help of a fellow man. Consequently, teamwork in many organizations is as important as the mutual interactions

of man. Politeness and respect are the first conditions for successful advancement of the team. However, they do not characterize teamwork. The important values of teamwork are communication, conflict resolution and cooperation among employees (Romig, 2006). Bernadin (2006) indicates that teamwork benefits employee performance by fostering higher group cohesion. He says that working in teams also causes workers to feel more responsible for their own and each other's performance. According to Kinicki and Williams (2008) there are many reasons why teamwork is now the cornerstone of progressive management with the main reason being that they improve employee performance by creating a sense of commitment.

Katzenbach and Smith (2005) reaffirm that the essence of teamwork is common commitment to performance. Kipsang (2005) elaborates how team building occurs. He says that team building normally undergoes five stages of development. Forming is the first stage when members get acquainted to one another. At storming stage, members want to exert greater influence over the process and some level of conflicts emerges. At norming stage, team members make effort to discover what standards of performance are acceptable. At the performing stage, the team is ready to be productive and work on the task assigned. The last stage is adjourning where the group comes to an end (Kipsang, 2005). As observed by Lepak and Snell (1999), effective firms are good at creating climates that encourage teamwork and condition employees to value and to believe there is a need to continually work together as a team. Lepak and Snell (1999) state that teamwork gives firms competitive advantage since they are able to build dynamic capabilities and avoid the erosion of their stocks of knowledge. This is because the employees continually learn from each other. Grant (2002) states that the more employees value teamwork the higher their performance can be expected to be positive over time provided they receive necessary support from management. Grant (2002) is of the opinion that teamwork is influenced by one's psychological state. He says that employees who believe they are more or less able to perform their jobs well, will likewise perceive that they contribute more or less to the success of their work than employees who do not perform their jobs as well.

Many activities of any organization are becoming complex daily due to advanced technology and it therefore calls for teamwork (Rufus, 1998). According to Ptaff and Huddleston (2003), there is need for teamwork in all types of organizations including non-profit making organizations. The teams should be taught how to improve their performance by improved skills acquisition through training. In addition, through teamwork, employees obtain the necessary skills for better individual performance and this improves the employees' performance (Stevens & Campion, 1994). It is possible for team participants to learn the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for working adequately in a team as revealed by Frobel and Marchington (2005).

Frobel and Marchington (2005) states that teamwork increases employee perceptions towards work by creating an environment of cooperation and hence employees learn from each other. Lack of teamwork reduces employee performance at work since they do not share important strategies for improving performance and therefore creates an environment of conflicts among employees (Boxall, 2007). Cohen and Manion (1999) argue that there are enough reasons for adoption of teamwork in non-profit making organizations especially regarding performance. According to the authors, organizations that have embraced teamwork have recorded increased employee performance, problem solving and stimulation of new growth in the organization. Thompson and Thompson (2009) note that many companies use the self-directed format of teamwork to perform better. In this format, the group leader is either assigned by the

management or elected by the members.

Thompson and Thompson (2009) recommend that the team leader must be effective for teams to perform well. This is because as Crosby (2001) admits, it is not easy to teach individuals on how to work in a team and therefore a team leader should have problem solving skills. Bacon and Blyton (2006) say that teamwork skills enhance communication and interpersonal relationship in teams while enhancing employee performance at work. According to Graham and Bennet (1998), what works in an organization in reaching its goals is not an individual, but properly integrated teamwork. The authors say that the main reason is that considering the vastness and the very nature of the work that an organization engages in, it is not possible for any one individual to even think of taking the entire load upon his own shoulders alone (Grant, 1996).

2.1 Theoretical Foundation of the Study

The study is based on Bruce Tuckman theory about Teamwork. Belsan (2013) discusses Bruce Tuckman theory about Teamwork. According to Belsan (2013), Bruce Tuckman theory was released in 1965. The theory, also known as Tuckman's stages, was made widely known to the intellectual community and contained four stages (later five) that would define the basic functions of a team in progress. The four original stages of [Tuckman's model](#) of group behavior were forming, storming, norming, and performing, with adjourning being added twelve years in later.

The stage of forming takes place when team or group members first meet one another. Tuckman explains how group members will explicitly attempt to avoid conflict in fear of giving off a bad first impression. According to Tuckman, very little work on the project at hand gets completed during this stage. This stage is more important for becoming acquainted and learning to work together. The second stage is known as storming. There is a double-edged definition within storming because not only does brainstorming of different individuals' ideas take place but the disagreements and arguments regarding these ideas also happen.

Tuckman explains that this stage is a test of group members' maturity and ability to compromise with others' opposing ideas, two major necessities when in a team setting. The third stage is norming, probably the most simple of the five stages. Norming takes place when storming completes and the group is ready to move forward with assigning roles and beginning physical production of work. The fourth stage, performing, happens when the group or team begins to work as one cohesive unit in an efficient and productive manner. There is very little argument or hesitation; the project closes in on completion as the individual members become properly synchronized within their roles

2. Research Methodology

This section discusses the research design, target population, sample design, data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive research design was used in this study.

3.2 Target Population

The target population was 1,300 employees of Machakos county government, Kenya.

3.3 Sample Design

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) recommend a sample size of between 10 and 30% as a good representation of the target population. A sample size of 10% (130 employees) was used to ensure that the sample size is manageable enough. Stratified random sampling procedure was used by grouping the employees into their respective departments and then randomly selecting respondents from the departments.

3.4 Data Collection

The data collection instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed using a five point Likert scale where the researcher aimed at soliciting the respondents' feedback on the role of teamwork on their performance at Machakos county government, Kenya. The respondents were specifically asked whether teamwork affects their performance at the county government of Machakos, Kenya. A scale of 1 to 5 was used as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics through the application of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis sought to meet the research objective.

3. Results of the Study and Discussion

The response rate was 92% representing 120 respondents out of the 130 respondents given questionnaires. This response rate was adequate for data analysis and conforms to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) stipulation that a response rate of 70% and above is adequate. The demographic information considered in the study comprised of gender, age, working experience, highest level of education and the respondents department of work. The results revealed that majority of the respondents view teamwork to affect their performance positively. 47% strongly agreed that teamwork affects their performance. 37% agreed that training affects their performance while 13% neither agreed nor disagreed. The minority, 3%, disagreed that teamwork affects their performance.

The mean was 4.3 on a Likert scale of five and a standard deviation of 0.66779. Working in teams causes workers to feel more responsible for each other's performance. Teamwork improves employee performance by creating an environment of cooperation and hence employees learn from each other. Collins and Smith (2006) equally developed a structural model of the effects of teamwork on firm performance which supports the results obtained in this study. The scholars found out that firm performance is positively affected by the extent of teamwork in the organization.

5. Conclusion

The findings lead to the conclusion that teamwork plays a positive role in employee performance at Machakos county government, Kenya. The higher the level of teamwork, the higher the level of employee performance and the lower the level of teamwork, the lower the level of employee performance. Employee performance could be improved by fostering teamwork in the organization and it is therefore recommended that employees be encouraged to work as a team. Team building activities should be factored in the various departmental budgets to ensure that employees learn the various skills necessary for a team to function effectively. The effectiveness of team building differs substantially from one organization to another (*Sanborn & Huszco, 2007*). The most effective efforts occur when team members are interdependent, knowledgeable, experienced and management actively supports the team. Effective team building incorporates an awareness of team objectives. Teams must work to develop goals, roles and procedures. As a result, teamwork is usually associated with increasing task accomplishment and achieving set goals (*Shuffler, DiazGranados & Salas, 2011*).

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