



EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONGST ACADEMIC STAFF IN THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

Lawrence Wainaina*

Dr. Mike Iravo*

Dr. Anthony Waititu**

Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of employee participation in decision making on academic staffs' organizational commitment in the private and public universities in Kenya. This survey study was a form of a cross-section study where descriptive research design was used. The study targeted all the academic staff in the public and private universities in Kenya. Stratified sampling was used where sixteen universities were selected followed by simple random sampling to select both representative department and staff from the selected departments. Data for the study was collected by administering a 25-item questionnaire to a sample of 347 academic. A total of 282 questionnaires were returned and analysis was done with the help of SPSS. To test the hypothesis for the study t-test and F-test were used. Correlation and regression analysis were also done. The study found that employee participation in decision making significantly influence university academic staffs' organizational commitment in Kenya. The study recommended that university academic staffs should be involved in making decisions especially those that affect their working life.*

Keywords: *Employee Commitment, Employee Participation, Decision Making, University Academic Staff.*

*Department of Entrepreneurship and Technology, Leadership and Management, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

**Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Employee Participation is generally defined as a process in which influence is shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchically unequal. Employee participation represents the combination of task-related practices, which aim to maximize employees' sense of involvement in their work, and human resource management practices that aim to maximize employees' commitment to the wider organization (Bhatti & Nawab 2011). Participatory management practice balances the involvement of managers and their subordinates in information processing, decision making and problem solving endeavors.

A sense of belonging is enhanced if there is a feeling of ownership among employees in the sense of believing they are genuinely accepted by management. The concept of ownership extends to participating in decisions on new developments and changes in working practices that affect the individuals concerned. They should be involved in making those decisions and feel that their ideas have been listened to and that they have contributed to the outcome.

Britain, Japan and USA are good examples of countries where there is employee participation. As per Britain's company Act 1985, it is a requirement on companies with over 250 employees to show in their Directors' report what steps they have taken to inform or consult with their employees on issues that affect them (Cole 1997). The 'ringi' method of decision making used in Japan involves a great deal of informal consultation and problem solving involving the employees who will be affected by the decision and the senior management (Tayeb, 2005). Americans prefer participative management; superiors are usually approachable and subordinates are more willing to question authority. Employee participation represents the combination of task-related practices, which aim to maximize employees' sense of involvement in their work, and human resource management practices that aim to maximize employees' commitment to the wider organization (Bhatti & Nawab 2011).

As Armstrong (2008) suggested, organizational commitment plays an important part in Human Resource Management philosophy. Human Resource Management policies are designed to maximize employee commitment, flexibility and quality of work. A committed employee has a strong desire to remain a member of an organization and accept its values in addition to readiness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization.



There is now a substantial body of evidence demonstrating the benefits to organizations for having a strongly committed workforce. According to Mayer & Martin, (2010) reviews of various research demonstrate that employees who are committed and especially affectively committed to an organization are less likely to leave and more likely to attend regularly, perform effectively, and be good organizational citizens.

1.2 Statement of Problem

In the Kenya Vision 2030, Kenya aimed at expanding access to university education from 4.6% as per 2008 to 20% by year 2030 with an emphasis on science and technology courses (Kenya Vision 2030). This target will be attained through the contribution of both public and private universities. In a study on public and private Universities in Kenya interviews with Universities' administrators revealed that acquisition of academic staff was one the five key issues facing the development of private universities in Kenya (Obagi. et el, 2005). Research on academic staff commitment is essential so that the universities can add knowledge on acquisition and retention of affectively committed staff. According to Kirkebut (2010), affectively committed employees are predicted to be high performers, register less absenteeism and turnover less.

Going by the rising rate of university enrolment for studies, the diverse nature of the courses being offered and the programs adapted by the universities in Kenya, a committed staff is needed if the universities are to accomplish their goals. Most private universities for example, since their establishment in 1990s have been offering programs such as business administration, computer science, accountancy, marketing, economics, and communications among others as they require less investment in resources, human resources not being an exemption (Kipkebut, 2010). However the trend is changing where courses like science and technology, engineering, medicine & health, law among others have been introduced in the private universities between 2008 and 2013 (CUE Approved Programmes, 2013). This calls for private universities to put measures in place to attract and retain their own committed staff. Most of the private universities have been operating with few full-time staff and mainly rely on part-time lecturers from public universities. A number of private universities hire public university lecturers to design their programmes in order to pass the Commission for Higher Education (CUE) scrutiny (Kirkebut, 2010). In a study of 139



academics from a Jordanian university Al-Omari *et al.* (2008) found that organizational commitment had significant positive effects on intent to stay and therefore they suggested that efforts to improve faculty retention should focus on the work-related factors that affect employee commitment.

The CUE requires that each academic programme be headed by an appropriate and qualified full time academic staff. The minimum academic qualifications of academic staff shall be at least one level above that of the academic programme. The ratio of full-time to part-time academic staff members is required to be 2:1. The maximum lecturer student ratio for the theoretical-based courses is 1:50 and 1:20 for practical-based courses (Commission for Higher Education, 2011). Most universities in Kenya have not been able to maintain the required standards with recently established public and private universities being the most affected. For example according to statistics released by CUE in 2013 Kenyatta University, with 61,928 students, has 961 academics and so there are on average 65 students per lecturer. Moi had a ratio of 1:47, with its 34,477 students and 736 teaching staff. University of Nairobi's ratio was 1:36 which is low as most of its courses are science based. Educational managers of the various universities need to understand the various predictors of staff commitment to retain their employees with an aim of achieving their organizational goals and operating within the CUE legal requirements.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 General Research Objective

The general objective is to analyze the determinants of organizational commitment amongst academic staff in the public and private universities in Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific Objective

1. To investigate the effect of employee direct participation in decision making on academic staffs' organizational commitment in the private and public universities in Kenya.
2. To make recommendations to the managers and administrators for effective human resource policy formulation.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The study will be guided by the following null hypotheses:



Null hypothesis

H₀₁: Employees' direct participation in decision making does not affect their organizational commitment.

Alternative hypothesis

H_{a1}: Employees' direct participation in decision making does affect their organizational commitment.

2.0 LIRERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Employee Participation in Decision Making

According to Northouse (2004), Employee Participation in Decision Making (EPDM) is rooted in the "theory Y" perspective of management. He therefore suggests that employees are fundamentally interested in performing well at work and will be more attached and committed to a work organization if their seniors value their contributions in making decisions that affect the nature of work. Although the effects of EPDM may vary with the nature of participation, higher levels of EPDM have been found to be positively related to higher levels of organizational commitment, lower employee turnover, and higher employee productivity. EPDM may also lead to better labor-management relations, stronger employee attachment to organizations, better quality decisions, and improved productivity (Elele & Fields, 2010)

EPDM as a Human Resource practices acts as a signal to the employees that their contribution is valued by the management. In their review of review of employee participation, Elele & Fields (2010) noted that employees most often will have more complete knowledge of their work than even their senior or supervisors. Decisions made in consultation with employees will be made with more information. Employees who are involved in decision making subsequently are better equipped to implement such decisions. Employees may also perceive their managers as valuing their contribution or that the managers are recognizing that employees are intelligent. This can lead to employee satisfaction and subsequently greater productivity.

Cotton et al. (1988) categorized EPDM as: direct employee participation with management in making work-related decisions, consultative participation where employee opinions are considered by managers in making decisions, employee partial ownership of the organization, and representative participation through a union or staff association. However



this study concentrated on employee direct participation and not indirect participation through representatives.

Employee direct participation in decision making can cover a broad spectrum ranging from briefing groups to board level representation. Involvement can be direct where employees participate direct in discussion or indirect through representatives. It can take the form of suggestion schemes, joint consultation, project teams, empowerment through delegation, staff meetings, partnership schemes and the share option/profit related pay (Cole 1997). The study investigated whether there was a relationship between employees' direct participation in decision making and employee organizational commitment.

2.2 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment generally means attachment and loyalty to an organization. It refers to the relative strength of the individual's identification with, and involvement in a particular organization. Employees' commitment especially affective commitment has been considered an important determinant of dedication and loyalty. Affectively committed employees are seen as having a sense of belonging and identification that increases their involvement and their desire to remain with the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2001). Staff commitment is important because committed employees are less likely to leave for another job and are more likely to perform at higher levels. According to a study conducted by Mathieu & Zajac (1990), the outcomes with the greatest correlation with commitment (in order) were intention to search, intention to leave, and actual turnover.

One of the models that have generated most research on organizational commitment is that developed by Meyer and Allen (1990). They labeled them: affective commitment (desire to stay), continuance commitment (perceived costs of leaving) and normative commitment (perceived obligation to stay) to distinguish the various types of commitment. According to them, more than one of each type of commitment may be present in an individual employee.

When a person has an affective commitment, he or she has the desire to follow a course of action. It refers to employees' emotional attachment to identification with, and involvement in the organization. An employee who has continuance commitment wants to continue the relation with an organization, because the costs of leaving the organization are too high. It may also happen that he or she has no alternatives. The third is normative commitment



which according to Meyer and Allen (1990) means that people feel the obligation to follow a certain course of action because of the much the organization has invested in them. Employees with strong affective commitment would be motivated to higher levels of performance and make more meaningful contributions towards the organization than employees who express continuance or normative commitment.

This study adopted Meyer and Allen's (1991) multidimensional organizational commitment because an employee's relationship with the organization can reflect varying degrees of all the three dimensions (Kipkebut, 2010). The applicability of Mayer & Allen model was tested in the Kenyan situation and was found to be applicable. This was done by Kipkebut (2010) in a study involving three public and three private universities among academic and administrative staff.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This survey study was a form of a cross-section study where descriptive research design was used. The study targeted all the academic staff in the public and private universities in Kenya. Stratified sampling was used where sixteen universities were selected followed by simple random sampling to select both representative department and staff from the selected departments. Data for the study was collected by administering a 25-item questionnaire to a sample of 347 academic. Ten items were measuring employee participation in decision making while 15 items were measuring organizational commitment (5 items for each type of commitment). A total of 282 questionnaires were returned and analysis was done with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

3.2 Target Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study was conducted in the public and private universities in Kenya and targeted all the academic staffs. There are 22 public and 27 private universities in Kenya spread in the main towns in Kenya. The population of academic staff in the universities in Kenya was 9258 (Public and Private Universities' HR Departments).

With a population of 9258, a sample size 384 respondents was selected using the formula $n = Z^2 pq / e^2$, developed by Cochran (1977). Since the population was small (less than 10,000) then the sample size was reduced slightly. This is because a given sample size provides proportionately more information for a small population than for a large population.



Cochran's (1977) correction formula was used to calculate the final sample size as suggested by Mugenda (2008) thus resulting to a final sample of 347 respondents.

Sampling was done in two stages where in the first stage stratified sampling was used. This technique will minimize the fear that certain groups (universities) within the population may be under-represented. In their study on employee organizational commitment Rego & Cuhna (2007) found that committed people tend to devote higher efforts to work, thus contributing to organizational performance. Since staff commitment is related to performance the public and private universities will be ranked and then categorized into four groups. Two universities were then selected from each tier in both university sectors making a total of sixteen while ensuring regional representation. The study concentrated on universities appearing top 44 in the Webometric Ranking of Kenyan universities 2014. Simple random sampling was used to select both representative departments and staff from the selected departments. This gave all objects an equal chance of being included in the sample.

3.4 Data Collection Method

Data for the study was collected by administering the specially designed questionnaire to a sample of 347 academic staff of the public and private universities in Kenya. The questionnaires were completed in the presence of the researcher or the research assistants. The respondents who felt they can complete their questionnaires during their free time were allowed to do so. To encourage open responses to sensitive questions, the questionnaires were anonymous. The completed questionnaires were then collected for analysis.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The ten factors measuring the independent variable employee direct participation in decision making were subjected to a reliability test where a Cronbach's value of 0.827 was obtained. The items were further subjected to factor analysis where all the ten items registered thresholds of above 0.4 and were thus all considered for further statistical analysis.

The 15 factors measuring the dependent variable employee organizational commitment were subjected to a reliability test. The fifteen factors were categorized into three to measure the three components of organizational commitment: affective, continuance and



normative. The Cronbach's Alpha value for the overall organizational commitment was found to be 0.738. The items were further subjected to factor analysis where all the 15 factors registered thresholds of above 0.4 and were thus all considered for further statistical analysis.

In descriptive statistics generally the findings indicated that there were meetings between administrators and staff, there were groups that solved specific problems, there were committee meetings where members got an opportunity to make their contribution, employees were delegated duties, there were joint consultations between management and other staff and suggestion schemes existed where members gave their views. However it was found that management did not give employees information on the financial situation of the universities and formal surveys of employees' views were minimal.

The Pearson Correlation of employee participation in decision making versus organizational commitment was computed and established as 0.445. The regression analysis shown a relationship $R = 0.445$ and $R^2 = 0.198$ which shows that 19.8% of the corresponding change in organizational commitment can be explained by unit change in employee participation in decision making.

To test the significance of regression relationship between employee participation in decision making and organizational commitment, the regression coefficients (β), the intercept (α), and the significance of all coefficients in the model were subjected to the t-test to test the null hypothesis that the coefficient is zero. The null hypothesis state that, β (beta) = 0, meaning there is no relationship between employee participation in decision making and organizational commitment as the slope β (beta) = 0 (no relationship).

The results on the beta coefficient of the resulting model shown that the constant $\alpha = 21.174$ was significantly different from 0, since the p value $p = 0.000$ was less than $p = 0.05$. The coefficient $\beta = 0.511$ was also significantly different from 0 with a $p = 0.000$ which is less than $p = 0.05$. This implied that the null hypothesis $\beta_1 = 0$ is rejected and the alternative hypothesis $\beta_1 \neq 0$ was taken to hold. This confirmed that there was a positive linear relationship between employee participation in decision making and organizational commitment.

F-test was then carried out to test the null hypothesis that there was no relationship between employee participation and organizational commitment. Analysis of variance



(ANOVA) was used to determine whether there is a regression relationship, between employee participation and organizational commitment. The ANOVA test shown that the significance of the F-statistic 0.000 was less than 0.05 meaning that null hypothesis is rejected and conclude that there is a relationship between employee participation in decision making and organizational commitment.

The findings are supported by Bhatti & Nawab (2011) in their study on determinants of organizational commitment in banking sector. In this study employee participation was found to have a positive association with organizational commitment in both private and public banking sector.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMEDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study found out that most of the academic staffs in the public and private universities in Kenya were committed to their organizations as their level of participation in decision making increases. Employee participation mostly is in the form of delegation of duties, staff meetings with the seniors and problem solving groups. The hypothetical basis of the study was thus ascertained by confirming that employee participation in decision making increases organizational commitment. The conclusion also suggested that management and administrators of universities may increase the level of commitment in their institutions by increasing contribution of employees within the organization.

5.2 Recommendations

Managements need to increase their interactions with employees in staff meetings and increasing guided discussions of topics related to issues in the organization. Employee suggestion schemes and attitude surveys should be implemented where employees can be interviewed to determine their perceptions of various organizational issues especially those that affect their working life. Employees should be allowed to make contribution in policy development as they play a major role in policy implementation and this among others will increase organizational commitment.

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