

DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN KENYA'S PRIVATE LIMITED COMPANIES IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Edwin Njururi

Graduate Student, United States International University – Africa, Kenya

mnjururi@yahoo.com

Timothy C. Okech 

Associate Professor, United States International University – Africa, Kenya

ctokech@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine factors affecting employee productivity in Kenya's private limited companies in the manufacturing sector. The specific objectives pursued were to establish the effect of institutional factors on employee productivity; to examine the effect of human resources practices on employee productivity; and finally to establish how employee characteristics affect productivity in private limited companies. Based on the specific objectives, hypotheses were formulated and tested to examine the factors that influence employee productivity in the selected companies. The study was guided by pragmatism paradigm using a mixture of research designs targeting selected companies in the manufacturing sector. The target population were employee in the companies whose sampling frame was obtained in the respective human resources office. Both primary and secondary data were collected to facilitate the realization of the objectives. Data collected was checked for errors and omissions, coded and analyzed to obtain both descriptive and inferential statistics. The significant factors affecting employee productivity were working environment, training level and experience of the employees, opportunities for employees' skills enhancement. Others were employee motivation, employees' level of education, age and gender, among others. The study recommends need for companies to continuously invest in necessary work related infrastructure and employee skills

development in structured and gap analysis. Similarly, companies need to put in place necessary hygiene factors for purposes of enhancing employee motivation. Also recommended is team work initiatives such as team building, reward system among others are necessary to foster good employee relationships in line with system theory.

Keywords: Employee productivity, private companies, team work, work environment, team building, hygiene factors

INTRODUCTION

Productivity is the quintessential indicator of effectiveness in a production system (Abramo & D'Angelo, 2014). Although various definitions have been adopted there seem to be consensus that productivity is the ratio of a volume measure of output to a volume of input use. It measures the efficiency of inputs of production, such as capital and labour used in an organization to produce a given level of output (Krugman, 1994; Rogers, 1998; OECD, 2001). Productivity of an organization increases when there is an increase in output with a lesser increase in inputs, or when equal output is realized with a lesser input (ILO, 2005). Productivity may also be considered in terms of labour or employee productivity, capital productivity, among other factor inputs (OECD, 2001).

Employee or labour productivity which is the concern of the study is the employee's actual contribution to the productivity of the organization, in terms of volume or personal capacities and quality of output of the employee or the intensity of their effort that reflects the productivity of labour (OECD Manual, 2001). Labour productivity is the measure of single-factor productivity that reflects output units produced per unit of a specific input (Syverson, 2010). Labour productivity is also considered as the value that is added by an employee, in an organization to create wealth through the organization's production process or services provision. Other scholars consider labour productivity as the measure of the amount and value of the work done by an employee, in relation to cost of resources used (Mathis & John, 2003).

Productivity is an essential ingredient for sustained competitiveness and profitability of an organization (Haenisch, 2012). The progression of productivity constitutes an important element for modelling the productive capacity of human resources (Krugman, 1994). When employees are productive the organization is able to realize its goals of shareholders wealth maximization. This as was argued by Mokaya *et al* (2013) is because employees determine how efficiently other resources in the organization are optimally realized. High productivity levels translate into lower unit costs thereby constituting a major driver of success in the organization

(Onyije, 2015). It also helps in motivating workplace culture and boost employee morale, and better company environment (Kalimullah, 2010). Motivated employees strive in ensuring that the organization does realize its goal. This therefore suggests that workplace is key to the success of an organization. Highly productive translates to the success of the organization (Ajala, 2012).

Given the role of labour productivity in organization, companies worldwide including Kenya have over years initiated and implemented various strategies earmarked towards enhancing labour productivity. These measures include but not limited to creation of a conducive productive environment, appropriate compensation mechanisms as well training and development of the workforce. The work environment in which employees operate determines the way in which such enterprises thrive (Sehgal, 2012). The quality of the employee's workplace environment impacts on the level of employee's motivation and subsequent performance (Sehgal, 2012). Some of these measures include better lighting, personal space, creative methods for accessing work space, personalization, safety measures, office design, more impromptu meeting for work well done and involvement in the decision that impact their day to day lives at work (Brenner, 2004; Sehgal, 2012). These it has been argued is vital in terms of increasing employees' productivity.

In increasingly competitive global business environment, companies are compelled to invest in capacity development to not only enhance efficiency but also improve productivity and performance (Awan & Tahir, 2015). Employee productivity is one of the sources of competitive advantage. In an organization, employees are arguably considered strategic because they are involved in the usage of other resources (Mokaya *et al.* 2013). In contrast, an organisation could have excellent resources but would still be uncompetitive if it fails to properly invest in ensuring it attracts and retains the best and most skilful human resources.

Employee benefit programs have far reaching effects on their productivity. For the organization workforce to be productive they must be well compensated, therefore an organization should provide its workforce with appropriate pay package in order to achieve productivity from the employees. Hong *et al* (1995) notes that material and financial benefit programmes are significant influential factors among employees in work-motivation and productivity. In Gielen *et al* (2009), performance related pay was identified to greatly increase employee productivity. Payments based on the quantity of work done rather than on the time spent on the job, is particularly beneficial for increasing worker productivity (Ray, 2016). Training and development earmarked towards enhancing acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude essential for carrying out a specific task or activity of the job contributes towards employee productivity. Training and development of the organization workforce improve the abilities of the employee and the organization as a whole. Employee development is invaluable

in increasing productivity since it not only motivates employees but also enhances skills growth and in the end improved performance (Hameed, 2011; Sunita & Srija, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Labour productivity is considered one of the major ingredients of organisational competitiveness (Bankert, Coberley, Pope & Wells, 2015). Thus establishing factors that drive employee productivity and how they can be used to improve it is critical. Some of these factors include provision of challenging job designs, motivation, training and development, incentives, rewards and recognition, appreciation, effective participation, autonomy, promotion, and the suitability of the organisational culture, among others (Gilfedder, 2014). Challenging job designs tend to give employees the drive to achieve the goals set which could though demanding may be achieved (Osibanjo *et al.*, 2015). This in the process motivates employees to put their feet forward while ensuring efficiency in resource utilization. Similarly, training and development imparts on the employees in terms of skills needed to effectively execute their duties and responsibilities (Afshan, Chakrabarti & Balaji, 2014). In the absence of such skills, it is argued even highly motivated employees may be unable to exhibit the desired levels of productivity.

Empowerment in decision making also helps in improving the productivity in that employees feel personally responsible for the achievements made in their respective areas of responsibility (Tudu, 2015). The use of material rewards such as the use of bonuses, provision of attractive salaries, among others, aid in motivating employees to put in more effort in maximizing output in the organisation (Onishi, 2013). The capacity of the organisation to apply these incentives may however be constrained by the amount of resources at the disposal of the organisation. Many companies have continued to invest in human resources development aimed at enhancing productivity of employees. The study sought to determine the factors that influence employee productivity in private limited companies in Kenya's manufacturing sub-sector. Specifically the study aimed at examining the institutional factors that affect employee productivity in private limited companies; determining the human resources practices that affect employee productivity; and finally assess how employee characteristics affect their productivity in private limited companies.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employed descriptive research design. As noted in Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), the design is applied where the problem is well defined, there exists information about the phenomenon, and the researcher can be involved in a survey by going to the target population

for the respondents to explain certain features about the problem under study. The design has various advantages including time saving, efficient in obtaining current factual information from respondents (Orodho, 2009). It describes and reports things such as possible behaviour, attitudes, values and characteristics the way they are Mugenda & Mugenda (2003). The rationale for using descriptive research design was that the research sought to examine employee productivity and how it is affected by various factors.

Population and Sampling Design

The target population of this study constituted employees in selected private limited companies in the manufacturing sub-sector. Determination of the target population considers the following elements: the ease of access and data collection; and the extent to which the subject of research affects the said target (Shaw, 2012). It requires an epistemological consideration which describes how the target population relates to the knowledge being sought. For example, while an expert would be knowledgeable by virtue of having studied the subject over time, the employees would contain experiential knowledge since they are the ones whose productivity is being examined. To identify the respondents, the study adopted stratified sampling due to the nature of the unit of analysis. As argued by Silver (2012), stratified sampling technique provides for the probability of inclusion of all the individuals with heterogeneous characteristics. Thereafter proportional allocation procedure was used to allocate sample elements in each group. The sample size from the selected companies was selected based on the formula suggested by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). This method provides a sample size that is considered sufficient to provide necessary data for purposes of making appropriate inferences. This formula is specified as shown:

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP (1 - P)}{d^2 (N - 1) + (X^2 P (1 - P))}$$

Where;

S = required sample size; = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.84); N = the population size P = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size); d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05). Given that stratified sampling was adopted, the researcher applied proportional allocation procedure to allocate sample elements in each group to the total sample size of 258 employees.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the study both primary and secondary data was collected. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires that contained both open ended and closed ended questions. Additional primary data was collected using in-depth interviews with key informants in the selected companies. Secondary data on the other hand was collected from existing company reports such as performance and evaluation reports, strategic plans, etc. The instruments were tested by pre-administering to a few employees in the selected companies. In this exercise, questions that were observed to be ambiguous were restructured. For a thorough and maximum participation of the respondents, the questionnaires were administered through drop and pick method whereby, the questionnaires were left for the respondents to be filled and then picked after some time. After collection, data was coded, cleaned before being analyzed to obtain both descriptive and inferential statistics.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Background Information

The study show a mix of employees in terms age with 32% of the respondents aged between 18 - 25 years, 32% , 10% and 26% aged 26 - 33 years, 34 - 41 years, and above 42 years, respectively. This is an indication majority of the employees fall within 18 – 40 years of age which is considered productive age. In terms of gender, 58% of the respondents were female, while the remaining 42% were male. In relation to the level of education, 28%, 22% and 4% had acquired diploma, bachelors and masters degree, respectively with the remaining 2% reporting primary level of education. This shows the majority of employees in the companies have basic level of education. In terms of experience, 34% had worked for between 1- 5 years, 26%, between 5 - 10 years, while 22% had worked for less than one year. This finding resonates with the results reported in terms of the age as reported in table 1. It can thus be stated that youthful employees seem to have acquired slightly higher level of education compared to others.

Table 1: Age and Level of Education

		Level of Education					
		Primary	Certificate	Diploma	First Degree	Masters	Total
AGE	18-25yrs		37.5%	12.5%	50.0%		100.0%
	26-33yrs		37.5%	37.5%	18.8%	6.3%	100.0%
	34-41yrs	7.7%	61.5%	23.1%		7.7%	100.0%
	42-49yrs		40.0%	60.0%			100.0%
Total		2.0%	44.0%	28.0%	22.0%	4.0%	100.0%

Human Resource Practices and Employee Productivity

As indicated in the background, one of the objectives of the study was to examine the influence of institutional factors on employee productivity. In this regard, factor analysis was applied to determine the significance of the various institutional factors that affected the productivity level of employee at work. The results of the analyses are as shown in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**

Table 2: Human Resource Practices and Employee Productivity

Institutional Factors	Significance
Meeting performance targets	.368** .009
Performance Appraisal	.303* .034
Innovation and problem solving capabilities	.318* .026
High work commitment level	.409** .004
Teamwork and training of colleagues	.347* .014
Making personal sacrifices to further organizational goals	.235 .101
Employee Motivation	.057 .694

** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results show that there was a significance relationship between meeting performance target (R=.368, P value=0.009), performance appraisal and the productivity level of employees (R=.303, P value=0.34). The findings also show a significant relationship between innovation and problem solving capabilities and the employee productivity. Also significant was work commitment level (R=.409, P value=.004), teamwork and training of colleagues (R= .347, P value .014) and employee motivation (R=.057, P value=.694).

Organizational Factors and Employee Productivity

This section provides analysis of the relationship between employee productivity and organizational factors. The results are summarized in table 3. As shown in the table, there was

significant relationship between employee satisfaction and general working environment with R value of 0.001 and P value of 0.531. There was also a significant relationship between the pay and rewards provided to the employee and their productivity ($R=.048$, $P \text{ value}=.304$). Similarly, there was a significant relationship between availability of training and career development opportunities at work place ($R=-.305$, $P \text{ value}=.033$), employee satisfaction with transparency and organizational justice and their productivity ($R=.004$, $P \text{ value}=.788$).

Table 3: Analysis of Organizational Factors and Employee Productivity

Organizational Factors	Significance level
Satisfaction with the working environment	-.001 .531
Satisfaction with the pay and rewards	.048 .304
Training and career development opportunities	-.305* .033
Satisfaction with transparency and organizational justice	.004 .788
Compatibility with the organizational culture	-.005 .974
Promotion	.021 .627
Organization structure	-.008 .955
Support by the supervisor	-.021 .392
Availability of working infrastructure	-.005 .081
Conflict between work and personal life	.086 .558

*. Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**.. Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

There was a significant relationship between employees compatibility with the organizational culture and their productivity level ($R=-.005$, $P \text{ value}=.974$). Further, a significant relationship was found between employee promotion in the organization and their productivity level ($R=.021$, $P \text{ value} .627$), organizational structure and the productivity level of employee in the organization ($R=-.008$, $P \text{ value}=.955$). Supervisor support to the employee had also a significant relationship

to the employee productivity ($R=-.021$, P value $=.392$). A significant was also established between the availability of working infrastructure and employee productivity ($R=-.005$, P value $=.081$) while an insignificant relationship between conflict between work and personal life and employee productivity ($R=.086$, P value $=.558$).

Employee Characteristics and Productivity

Like in the case of institutional and environmental factors, analysis was conducted to determine the significance of the personal characteristics that affected the productivity level of employee at work. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of Personal Characteristics Employee Productivity

Employee Attributes	Significance
Gender and Productivity	.013 . 0.005
Age and productivity	.174 .227
Level of Education and Productivity	.149 0031
Training and Productivity	-.042 . 0067
Experience and Productivity	.137 .344
Marital status and Productivity	.100 . 00491
Relationship with Colleague	. 0042 .00647

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

As shown in the table, there was a significant relationship between the employee gender and productivity ($R=.013$, P value $=.0.005$), age of employee ($R=.174$, P value $=.0.0220$), respectively. Also found to affect employee productivity significantly were level of education ($R=.149$, P value $=.0031$), employee training ($R=-.042$, P value $=.0067$) and experience of employee ($R=.137$, P value $=.344$). Finally, a significant relationship between the marital status of employee ($R=.100$, P value $=.00491$), employee relationship with colleague ($R=.042$, P value $=.0064$).

Combined effects of environmental, human resources practices and employees characteristics and productivity

In the study, multiple regression analysis was undertaken to examine the relationship between employee productivity and various exogenous variables. The general form of the regression equation was $Y = a + bX$ 1

Where: Y was employee productivity as an endogenous variable; a was the Y-intercept and it constituted the estimated value of Y when X which was a vector was zero. While b was the slope of the line, or the average change in Y for each change of one unit (either increases or decreases) in the independent variable X. Before model estimation, correlation analysis was conducted to determine the variables to include in the study where suitability of the working environment, level of education, age of employees and gender of employees were finally considered. Other variables were training level of the employees; experience of the employees in years; satisfaction with rewards provided, employee motivation and opportunities for career development opportunities within the companies. Thus equation one was expanded to equation two (2).

$$Y = a + bx_1 + cx_2 + dx_3 + ex_4 + fx_5 + gx_6 + hx_7 + ix_8 + jx_9 \quad \dots\dots\dots 2$$

Where: Y was the level of employee productivity; x_1 suitability of the working environment; x_2 level of education; x_3 age of employees; x_4 the gender of employees; x_5 training level of the employees; x_6 experience of the employees in years; x_7 satisfaction with rewards provided; x_8 employee motivation; x_9 career development opportunities within the companies.

Table 5: Regression Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
(Constant)	3.956	.889		4.449	.000
Satisfaction with the working environment	-.055	.188	-.051	-.294	.770
Level of Education and Productivity	.103	.134	.140	.773	.444
Age and productivity	.136	.122	.202	1.111	.274
Gender	-.040	.102	-.067	-.392	.697
Training and Productivity	.161	.151	.183	1.067	.292
Experience and Productivity	.099	.161	.095	.616	.542
Satisfaction with the pay and rewards provided	.291	.138	.362	2.109	.041
Employee Motivation	-.057	.107	-.092	-.527	.601
Training and career development opportunities	.222	.122	.308	.819	.077
	R –	R-Squared	Adjusted R	Std. Error of the	

0.488 – 0.786 Square: .738 Estimate = .7127

As indicated in the table, the variables which were statistically significant included employee satisfaction with the working environment which however had a negative relationship ($r = -.055$) with employee productivity; education level with a positive value indicating a positive relationship between employees level of education and productivity ($r = .103$). Other significant factors were age of employee, gender and training level. Age had a positive relationship with productivity ($r = .136$), while gender had a negative relationship with their productivity ($r = -.040$). On the other hand, training of employee and experience both exhibited positive relationship with productivity. Finally, employee satisfaction with the pay and rewards provided had a positive relationship with their productivity ($r = .291$), while employee motivation had a negative relationship with their productivity ($r = -.057$).

DISCUSSION

The study sought to examine the influence of organizational, human resource practices and employee attribute on labour productivity. The study revealed that employee productivity is positively impacted by achieving the performance target of the company. The finding is in line with Mudor & Tookson (2011), argument that desire to achieve the set target is the motivation that makes most employees perform efficiently and be good at something within the organization as the employee realizes that their work effort is worth to the companies. The study also established that performance appraisal helped employees in their endeavour to enhance productivity. This finding concurs with Rudman (2003), who noted that performance appraisal is a critical factor in an organization in enhancing the performance of the employee.

The study also established that employees' productivity was greatly influenced by work commitment by the employees. This is because committed employees are expected to put in effort in whatever they do in order to facilitate the realization of the company's objectives. These findings resonate with what was reported by Varsha & Bhati, (2012) that employees' commitment is significantly related to sustained productivity. The study also established that teamwork, training and skills development had a significant effect on employee productivity. Employee training is necessary in skills development which is an important ingredient in maximizing productivity. Training and career development will help develop the skills of an employee thus making them better in what they do and therefore improving their productivity. This is in line with the findings of Ollukkaran & Gunaseelan (2012), which proved that training and development is helpful in increasing employees' performance

In terms of human resource practices, issues to do with working environment, pay and rewards, training and career development, transparency and organizational justice, compatibility

with organizational culture, promotion, organization structure, among others significantly affected productivity. This concurs with Ajala (2012), who argued that conducive working environment helps in improving productivity. Transparency in the organization allow the employee to understand the operations in the company, this understanding can help in making the employee perform well. When employees are handle fairly at work they will be free to perform well. This finding relates to Adams' equity theory that indicates an individual can alter their quality and quantity of work to restore justice when they perceive that the outcome/input ratio not to be just (Adams, 1966).

The study found out that employee compatibility with organizational culture leads employee to perform from an average level to some high extent level. When employees' culture is in line with the culture of the organization, the employee does not find it difficult to operate in that organizational environment since they share common belief and practises. This finding is in line with Wambugu, (2014) that found out organizational values (culture) has a more significant effect to employee's job performance. This contrasts the findings of Nguyen, Dang, & Nguyen, (2014) who argued that promotion opportunities positively influence employee performance. The study also found out that organizational structure leads to high performance level by employee. The structure of an organizational will allow a smooth operation of the employee. This concurs with Hao, Kasper, & Muehlbacher (2012) who noted in their study that senior managers were of the opinion that organizational structure improves performance directly and through innovation. The study revealed that support employee got from their supervisor made them perform highly in the organization. Supervisor support will help boost employee morale, by motivating them to put in more effort aimed at increasing productivity. These findings are in line with Leblebici (2012) who argued that support from the supervisor is helpful in increasing employees' productivity level. Office design as part of infrastructure was found to significantly impact on productivity. This finding supports Hameed & Amjad, (2009) who argued that office design is very vital in terms of increasing employees' productivity.

In terms of employee characteristics, various factors were found to significantly affect employee productivity. Among these included gender, age, level of education, experience, among others. For instance, the study established that productivity of employee was high when the work design suited their gender. Most employees noted that they were able to achieve their set targets when they are working where they feel their personal ego is not damaged. For example, men will perform poorly when performing task that they feel is meant for ladies. On the other hand, education is expected to expand the knowledge base of the employee thus making them more creative and innovative thus improving their way of doing things. This is in line with NG & Feldman, (2009) who stated in their study that education promotes core task performance

by providing individuals with more declarative and procedural knowledge with which they can complete their tasks successfully. Similarly, as noted by Githinji (2014) training provides employees with requisite skills for performing tasks assigned. Experience makes employee master their job and this make them perform their duties with ease and therefore achieving high productivity (Uppal, Mishra, & Vohra, (2014).The study established that the productivity of employee was affected by marital status on a positive note.

CONCLUSION

From the study, it can be inferred that institution factors have a significant effect on employee productivity. In this regard, organization are encouraged to take into account institutional factors that are seen to drive employees to high performance levels and improve them in order to achieve high production from its work force. This study established that employee performance was greatly influenced by their environment of work, the organization should therefore strive to ensure an enabling environment of work for its employee as this will ensure employee are at ease at work and enable them to focus at work and thus lead to high productivity level. The management should ensure they retain their workforce so that they can be able to utilize their experience, the management should also arrange team building activities that will help build employee relationships with colleague as seen this will enhances their performance.

Ensuring a quality workplace in the organization is sure way of enhancing productivity in the organization. According to Sehgal, (2012) the kind of work environment in which employees operate determines the way in which such enterprises thrive. As argued by Sehgal, the quality of the employee's workplace environment that most impacts on the level of employee's motivation and subsequent performance. A safe working environment for instance leads to increased level of job satisfaction and this can help the organization to retain employees for a longer time. This makes the organization to have an experienced workforce which is more skilled and can achieve better productivity.

Employee benefit programs have far reaching effects on their productivity. For the organization workforce to be productive it must be well compensated, therefore an organization should provide its workforce with appropriate pay package in order to achieve productivity from the employees. Payments based on the quantity of work done rather than on the time spent on the job, is particularly beneficial for increasing worker productivity (Ray, 2016). As observed by Moreland (2013), a reward system in the organization is a very important tool in managing the human resource and failure to reward the workforce for their collective and individual efforts often leads to dissatisfaction manifested in various forms for example industrial strikes, go slows or the so called wild cat strikes and grievances against the employer, and clearly this affects the

organization productivity. Designing and implementing an effective reward system is a critical human resources activity which influences the attainment of performance targets and effectiveness of an organization to deliver on its mission and mandate.

Training and development of employee in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude essential for carrying out a specific task or activity of the job is critical. This helps in improving their abilities which enhanced productivity. As noted by Hameed (2011) when employees are more developed, they will be more satisfied and committed with the job and their performance would be increased. Skill development improves productivity and helps sustain enterprise development and inclusive growth, it facilitates a cycle of high productivity, income growth and development (Sunita & Srija, 2015). While employee training and development will lead to high productivity of employee, lack of training and development in employee will lead to low productivity. As argued by Sunita & Srija (2015) lack of access to education and training opportunities not only motivates employees but also enhances their skills which contribute positively towards production. An organization has therefore to devise strategies of enhancing human capital as a key input in production. According to Galanou & Priporas (2009) training process is one of the most extensive technique to enhance the productivity of individuals and communicating organizational goals to employees. In Hutchings *et al* (2009) training was considered the most effective way of motivating and retaining high quality in human resources within an organization that can assure productivity. Companies thus need to optimize its workforce productivity by investing in skills development through necessary training programs.

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