

Influence of Training on Performance of Employees in MERU Central Subcounty

John Mutwiri Mwithimbu¹, Dr. Ann Kariuki², Dr. Ibuathu Charles Njati³.

School of Business and Economics Meru University of Science and Technology

School of Business and Economics Meru University of Science and Technology

School of Education Meru University of Science and Technology

Corresponding Author: John Mutwiri Mwithimbu

Abstract: Organizations globally develop frameworks, policies and practices that guide how employees work. The extent to which employees perform their task will determine the extent to which an organization realizes its vision and objectives. The aim of this study was to establish the influence of training on performance of employees in Meru Central Sub County. This study targeted only those employees who were devolved from the national government thus leaving out those county government employees who were recruited by the county public service board. Descriptive research design was adopted to establish the determinants of performance of employees. The target population were 143 employees working in five departments devolved from national government to county government. These departments were: health; agriculture, livestock development and fisheries; water and irrigation; public works; and cooperative department. Due to the small size of the target population, the researcher used census method. A questionnaire for county government employees and an interview guide were used to collect primary data based on the objective of the study. The researcher performed data quality checks to get rid of questionnaires which were not properly filled. Questionnaires were serialised and data entered. Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. The findings were presented in form of frequency and correlational tables. A simple linear regression model was used to explain the relationship between training and employee performance. The study revealed that training had a statistically significant relationship with performance of employees. The study recommends that training should be carried out across the board without discriminating employees based on the ranks.

Key words: Employee training; performance of employees; organization of training; Meru Central Sub County

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I. Background of the Study

Today, organizations are worried about the performance of their employees because performance of the employees affects performance of the organizations (Musse, 2012). Lavigna (2013) argues that in both public and private sectors employees who are engaged outperform employees in organizations where they are not engaged. There is therefore, very high potential to improve government performance by improving engagement. Chebet and Wanyonyi (2015) emphasize that it is very important for county governments to develop and implement focused training and development programs as this will lead to improved performance.

Competitiveness in most of the organizations today is based on the extent to which human assets is effective. This includes the ability of employees to create as well as apply their skills and knowledge to work effectively (Luecke, 2006). Lee (as cited in Nyamunga, 2016) emphasizes that few organizations approach employee performance in a holistic manner even though employee performance is probably the most important variable in the success of any organization today. Employees would perform better if they are satisfied. They would produce superior quality performance in optimal time and lead, and also be likely to be creative and innovative (Odembo & Muathe, 2013). Bowers, Baker and Salas (as cited in Kimeu & K'Obonyo, 2015) add that destructive organizational climate that is characterised by negative attitudes and lack of motivation usually affect performance of employees and usually lead to high employee turnover.

Providing training in an organization enhances employees' skills and abilities and this makes them marketable to compete with their colleagues (Odembo & Muathe, 2013). Government of Kenya (as cited in Mwikali & Wafula, 2015) emphasizes that most county officers lack training since most of them have been employed by being politically correct with those in leadership positions hence it becomes hard to apprehend them in the event of failure to perform according to their employers expectations. There is need therefore, for county governments to improve on employee training as this will lead to continued improvement and performance of employees (Chebet & Wanyonyi, 2015). Hogarth and Enniful (2012) recommend that the

methods involved in training needs to be dully followed to equip employees as this will make them perform better on the job.

II. Statement of the Problem

A study on factors influencing the implementation of devolution in Meru County by Kubai and Keiyoro (2015) established that 77% of the respondents working in the county government had no significant sponsorship for relevant training. This in return had an effect on how the county government performed in terms of the implementation of devolution. Wainaina and Bellows (2014) determined that training of employees offered them skills to perform better as was shown in the study by a mean score of 4.09. Employee training is a motivational factor that can enhance the knowledge of the employee towards the job thus can lead to achievement of organization objectives and goals (Bhat, 2013).

As much as a number of studies have been done both globally and locally on employee performance, locally done studies covered both the employees that were devolved together with those recruited by county public service board. There are no studies that have been carried out to investigate influence of training on performance of county government employees targeting only those employees that were devolved from national government. This was a clear indication that there existed a gap. This study therefore, aimed to fill that gap by answering the question: What are the effects of employee training on work performance of county government employees in Meru Central Sub County?

III. Study Objectives

- i. To determine the influence of training organization on employee work performance.
- ii. To determine the influence of timing of the training on employee work performance.
- iii. To determine the relationship between training and employee work performance.

IV. Research Questions

- i. What are the effects of training organization on work performance of county government employees in Meru Central Sub County?
- ii. What are the effects of timing of training on work performance of county government employees in Meru Central Sub County?
- iii. What is the relationship between training and employee work performance?

V. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the human capital theory that was proposed by Gary S. Becker and Jacob Mincer in 1960s. Gary, one of the proposer or this theory emphasizes that tangible forms of capital such as shares, assembly lines are not the only the only ones that constitute the type of capital. Economists regard expenditures on health, education, and training as investments in human capital. Employees making investment decisions compare the attractiveness of alternative future income and consumption streams, some of which offer enhanced future income, in exchange for higher present training costs and deferred consumption. Kucharcikova (as cited in Alika & Aibieyi, 2014) state that human capital as the sum of the individual congenital and acquired skills, knowledge, and experiences of individuals. While hiring new employees, it is important that county public service board look into factors such as level of education. This may help the organization identify any training needs that the employer may require in order to enable him perform optimally thus realizing organization goals. The same can also be said during promotion based on different employee cadres. This is because employees bring different values of human capital to the organization. It is also important to emphasize that human capital is characterized by factors such as a person's experience, tenure, education and training. An employee who has been competitively recruited or who has a wealth of experience, for example can add value to that person's human capital compared to an employee who was employed just because of political interests such as being well connected to a politician.

VI. Conceptual Framework

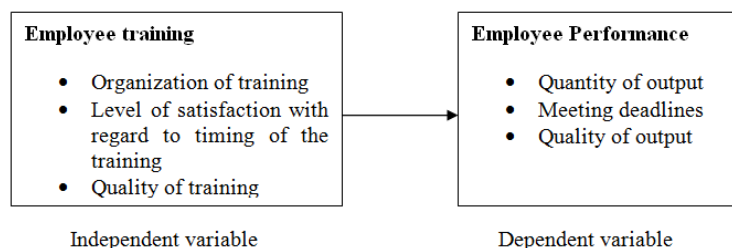


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

VII. Empirical Literature

7.1 Employee Training and Employee Performance

Training and development have been found to have an impact on the way employees perform their duties in an organization (Nassazi & Ossi, 2013). A study in Greece on effect of employee training on organization performance by Glaveli and Karassavidou (2011) established that employee training led to higher level of job satisfaction thus leading to improved job performance in terms of better service quality and higher customer satisfaction. According to this study, a structured as well as a long term approach to employee training results in job satisfaction thus making employees to perform better. In addition, pre and post training activities and conditions leads to creation of positive perceptions with regards to the value of training. Similarly a study in small and medium enterprises in the European Union on effects of training on business results by Aragon-Sanchez, Barba-Aragon and Sanz-Valle (2010) established some evidence of significant relationships between training and performance. According to this study, an organization that makes a higher investment in employees training, especially the organizations that train a higher number of employees end up getting better results in terms of better productivity as opposed to those organizations that make less investment.

Employee training is very important in an organization. Employee training has been associated with improved employee performance whereas lack of it leads to lower performance (Kimeu & K'Obonyo, 2015). These researchers add that trained employees perform better, however, lack of training results to lower levels of their performance.

In Ghana, a study by Otoo, Kwesi and Dontwi (2012) on effect of training and development on employee performance determined that training and development had a positive impact on the performance of employees with 40% of the respondents indicating that top management did not support training and development hence the impact. According to a study by Mohamud and Aseeey (2014) on effect of training on employee performance in the public sector revealed that employees were not aware of the trainings that the management wanted to provide because a training needs assessment was not carried out periodically. It was also established that employees were not satisfied with the organizational training and development and this affected performance of employees.

A study on effects of training on employee performance by Githinji and Nyamberega (2014) revealed that training not only enhances employee engagement in innovation, but also enhances better performance among employees. Training of employees can be effectively done if an organization conducts a training needs assessment. In Migori Kenya, a study on the effect of motivation on employee performance by Omollo and Oloko (2015) established that most of the respondents felt that job training was very crucial as it kept them with the current trends in the market. This can be achieved by showing the employees how to deconstruct activities as well as challenges that they face at the work place. By demonstrating to the employees on how to cope in their work places this can make them feel motivated and thus perform better.

In Meru County, a study on effect of performance appraisal systems on employees by Omboi and Kamencu (2011) revealed that employee training enhanced the performance of employees with a 46% of the respondents' indication. The study also revealed that frequency of training, training programs, form of training approaches and effectiveness of training methods affected the effectiveness of the performance appraisal in the organizations. Another study in the same county by Kiliungu and Wambua (2013) on human resource management practices and their effect on employee performance established that training of employees by an organization enables them to perform better, increase their self-esteem and skills thus leading to their higher performance.

VIII. Research Methodology

8.1 Research Design

The study adopted descriptive research design to establish the determinants of performance of employees in the devolved functions. With the researcher focusing only on those employees who were devolved from national government to county government, descriptive research design was used to describe how employee training, employee incentives, performance appraisal, and attitude influence their performance. Descriptive research design was greatly useful in this study as it helped in understanding the current state of affairs (Matthews, & Kostelis, 2011) pertaining the influence of the independent variable on the performance of employees without manipulating any variable.

Cochran (as cited in Machira, Njati, Thiaine & Guyo, 2014) adds that descriptive research design is used when data is collected to describe persons, organizations, settings, or phenomena. In addition, with a number of related studies done locally using descriptive research design, the researcher thought it fit to use it in this study.

8.2 Study Locale

The study was carried out in Meru Central Sub County. The researcher has worked in this sub-county for seven years and therefore was very familiar with the locale. In addition, the researcher had interacted with the majority of the targeted respondents and therefore it was expected that out of that interaction the information obtained represented the true situation about determinants of performance of county government employees. According to MCoG (2013) Meru Central Sub County is one of the nine Sub counties in Meru County. It covers an area equivalent to 790.2km². The sub county has 5 electoral wards and 65 sub locations-the highest in Meru County. The 2017 projected population and population density are 138,066 and 414/km².

8.3 Target Population

The target population in this study were employees devolved from national government to county government only, thus leaving out those employees who were freshly recruited by the county government of Meru through county public service board. The employees were distributed in only five functions in Meru Central Sub county which included: health; agriculture, livestock development and fisheries; water and irrigation; public works; and cooperative department. According to Meru County Government, department of human resource there are a total of 143 employees working in those five departments described above.

8.4 Sampling Design

Sampling is a process that consists of selecting a part of the population so as to estimate characteristics about the entire population (Thompson, 2012). But, due to the size of the target population which was not too large, the researcher used census. In this method, data are collected from individual members of the study's target population (Sahu, 2013). According to Daniel (2012) census has benefits of minimizing sampling error and may lead to study having credible results.

8.5 Research Instruments

In this study, a questionnaire and interview guide for county government employees in Meru Central Sub County were used to collect data. These study instruments were used to obtain primary data about the independent variable and the dependent variable. The questionnaires were self-administered to the respondents. Questionnaires provide highly structured data and potential reduction in bias (Jones, 2015); questionnaires allow anonymity (Mitchell & Jolley, 2013): respondents may decide not to indicate their names anywhere in the questionnaire; cheaper to administer because of lack of need for an interviewer (Athanasidou, Debas & Darzi, 2010).

8.6 Pilot Study

Pilot studies as small as 15-25 subjects can be invaluable in designing a full scale project (Katz, 2006). In this study, a sample size of 20 participants participated in the pilot study. These participants were drawn from the departments in Meru Central Sub County as follows: health department (8); department of agriculture (6); water and irrigation (3); and public works (3). These participants were later excluded from the final study. According to Brink and Wood (1998), participants selected for the pilot study should come from the same population from which participants in the proposed major study will be selected, although the individuals selected should not be included in the major study. The researcher guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity to all the participants just as they would in the major study. The actual data collected by the researcher on the independent variable and one dependent variable were carefully analysed to ascertain whether or not the participants answered the research questions correctly.

8.7 Validity of Research Instrument

Validity of a research instrument is the extent to which an instrument accurately measures the target it was designed to measure and this helps a researcher determine whether or not a research instrument addresses its designed purpose (Andrew, Pedersen & McEvoy, 2011). Research is considered valid when the conclusions of the study are true (Connaway & Powell, 2010). In order to measure the content validity of the data collection instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed with the help of the supervisors on its relevance to the topic under study. The supervisors assessed whether the actual content of the questionnaire made sense with regard to the constructs being measured by the researcher.

8.8 Reliability of Research Instrument

Reliability of a research instrument is a matter of whether applied repeatedly to the same object, it would yield the same result each time (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). In order to ensure the questionnaire for county government employees was reliable, the researcher used Cronbach's alpha method. Cronbach's alpha test of reliability measures how well a set of variables or items measures a single, uni-dimensional latent construct. The

Cronbach alpha coefficient for this study was 0.76. This scale was considered good for this study. In fact Andrew, Pedersen and McEvoy (2011) emphasized that alpha values above 0.7 are considered desirable.

8.9 Data Analysis Model

In this study, the researcher used a simple linear regression model. This model was used to explain the relationship between performance of employees of county government and training. The model explaining the relationship between independent and dependent variables was derived as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$$

Where: Y= Employee Performance

β_0 = Intercept term

β_1 , =Slope coefficients for the independent variable

X_1 = Training

IX. Data Analysis, Presentation and Discussion

9.1 Gender of the Respondents

Respondents were required to indicate their gender. Results are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Gender of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	61	53.5
	Female	53	46.5
	Total	114	100.0

The study established that majority of the employees at 54% who were devolved were male whereas 46% were females. It was evident that majority of the employees were male. However, the difference was not to a large extent.

9.2 Age of the Respondents

Besides the respondents gender, respondents were required to indicate their age. Results are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Age of the Respondents

Age	18-29	5	4.8
	30-39	35	30.4
	40-49	48	42.4
	50 and above	26	22.4
	Total	114	100.0

The study also revealed that 4.8% of the respondents aged between 18-29 years; 30.4% aged between 30-39 years; 42.4% aged between 40-49 years; and 22.4% aged above 50 years. This could be attributed to the fact a few years to the start of devolution; the government had drastically reduced employment so as to curb the high wage bill hence the minority of the respondents were aged 18-29. In addition, when employees were devolved a significant proportion of those who had worked for the national government for a long period of time and aged more than 50 years may have resigned from their positions so as to go and work for county governments in their home counties.

9.3 Level of Education

Respondents were required to indicate their highest level of education. The findings are as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Level of Education

Highest level of education	Master's degree	13	11.4
	Postgraduate diploma	29	25.4
	Bachelor's degree	57	50.0
	Diploma	12	10.5
	Certificate	3	2.6
	Total	114	100.0

With regard to the respondents' highest level of qualification, this study established that majority of the respondents at 50.0% were first degree holders. This group of respondents was followed by post-graduate diploma graduates and master's degree holders who were each represented by a proportion equivalent 25.4% and 11.4% respectively of the total respondents. None of the respondents indicated or responded that they either had a doctor of philosophy degree or primary school graduate as the highest level of qualification. This could be an indication that a significant proportion of employees even those who were employed with only a diploma certificate could have gone back to class to advance their level of education so that they can get a promotion as noted by a report by GoK (2018) which noted that performance and merit are not the only requirements for appointment to higher grades, but also requisite academic and or professional qualifications can lead an employee being promoted irrespective of his or her performance.

9.4 Training

Respondents were required to indicate whether they had attended any training within their respective areas of work in the last three years. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Attended a Training Course

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	85	74.4
No	29	25.6
Total	114	100.0

The study reveals about three quarters of the devolved employees had attended a training course in the last three years. A quarter of the respondents indicated that they had not attended any training in the last three years. These findings seem to agree with a study carried out in Kakamega County by Khaemba (2017) on influence of training and development on performance of employees which established that only 82.0% had attended training since they started working for the institution. The study also determined to establish the extent to which the respondents agreed to certain statements relating to employee training. The results are as shown in Table 5. As much as majority of the respondents indicated that they had attended training in the last three years, a proportion slightly higher than 50% were of the opinion that invitation to attend trainings seemed to favour only the senior county government employees especially the heads of the departments at the sub county level, thus leaving out quite a number of junior employees who form a bulk of county government employees, and thus can negatively affects performance of their day-to-day activities. These findings agree with a study carried out in Muranga County on career stagnation and employee performance by Wawira, Mathews, Machogu, and Wanjala (2017) which revealed that lack of necessary skills which can be easily acquired through training can affect performance of employees. Respondents also indicated that most of the trainings were only in-house type which lasted less than five days. Respondents especially the heads of departments felt that the county government can improve the area of training by sponsoring them to attend the senior management course which last not less than four weeks. This will not only enhance their leadership skills but also enhance their performance.

Table 5 Statements Relating to Training

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mode
The training was well organized	0.0%	1.1%	16%	50.0%	33.0%	4
The time of training was appropriate	0.0%	8.6%	15.1%	46.2%	30.1%	4
The quality of training was good	0.0%	4.3%	12.9%	52.7%	30.1%	4
The training was beneficial to me in the long run	0.0%	5.4%	18.3%	54.8%	21.5%	4
I would recommend the training element	0.0%	3.2%	8.6%	65.6%	22.6%	4
The training was relevant to the needs of the county government	0.0%	4.3%	16.1%	51.6%	28.0%	4

The study revealed that majority of the respondents at 83.0% (mode=4) responded in affirmative that the training was well organized. Only 1% of the respondents who indicated that they had attended training in the previous three years disagreed that the training was well organized. With regard to whether the timing of the training was appropriate, 76% (mode=4) responded in affirmative. Only 9% of the respondents disagreed that the timing of the training was appropriate. Eighty three percent (mode=4) of the respondents agreed that the quality of the training was good, with 76% of the respondents indicating that in the long run the training was beneficial to them. The results of this study are in agreement with a study by Githinji and Nyambegera (2014) on effects of training performance of employees which revealed that 79% of the respondents agreed that training imparted skills on long term thinking, thus positively influencing their performance. In addition, 88% of the

respondents agreed that they would recommend the training element, whereas 80% responding in affirmative that the training was relevant to the needs of the county government. With the majority of the respondents responding in the affirmative to this statement on training, this is an indication that it maybe influencing performance of employees. These findings seem to be in agreement with a study by Kiliungu and Wambua (2013) carried out in Meru County which revealed that training of employees enabled them not only to perform better, but also increased their self-esteem thus making them perform better.

9.5 Relationship between Training and Employee Performance

The researcher carried out a test in order to determine the extent to which training influenced performance of employees in Meru Central Sub County. The results are as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Relationship between Training and Employee Performance

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.576	1.835		5.219	.000
	Training	.575	.077	.558	7.453	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Performance						

Based on the results in Table 6, it is evident that training has a statistically significant (p-value less than 5%) and positive relationship with performance of employees. These results are in agreement with a study by Dabale, Jagero and Nyauchi (2014) on relationship between employee training and organization performance which established that there exists a very strong positive relationship between training and employee performance. The results reveal that a unit increase in training leads to 0.575 increase in performance of county government employees.

Based on the results in Table 6, the simple linear regression model was thus developed as follows:

$$Y = 9.56 + 0.575x_1$$

Where;

Y = Performance

x₁ = Training

From this linear model, a unit increase in training, results to an increase of 0.575 units of performance.

9.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

The study revealed that about a quarter of the devolved employees had attended training in the previous three years with almost a similar proportion indicating that the training was relevant to the needs of the county government. It was also established that training had a positive and statistically significant relationship with employees' performance. This study therefore concludes that the county government should continuously train its employees so as to realise their full potential and thus have the goals and objectives of the department and the county government achieved. Junior employees also play a very important role in ensuring the vision and goals of the county are achieved. Therefore, they should not also be left behind especially when training opportunities arise.

Training of employees should be carried out fairly across the board. Employees should not be discriminated based on their ranks. With the study revealing that training attendance is in favour of heads of department, the study recommended that junior employees need to be considered for training so as to continuously enhance their skills, enhance their morale and motivation, and improve their performance. Training will in addition prepare them once they have been promoted in their respective departments.

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