Influence of Inspirational Motivation on Employee Engagement in Public Universities in Kenya

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Abstract *This study sought to establish the influence of inspirational motivation on employee engagement in Public Universities in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This study sampled 20 Chairpersons of Departments, 5 Registrars of Academic Affairs, 5 Deans of Students, 5 Quality assurance officers and 313 Lecturers. A total sample of 348 respondents were drawn using stratified random sampling techniques from a target population 5 out of the 31 public university that included; University of Nairobi, Moi University, Egerton University, Kenyatta University and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Data was collected using questionnaires and document analysis. Data was analyzed quantitatively by use of mean and standard deviations and qualitatively by regression, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and trend analysis. The results were presented in form of frequency tables. The results indicate that there is a relatively strong but significantly positive association between inspiration motivation and employee engagement (R=.563). Inspiration motivation explained 31.7% of the variation in employee engagement.*
Key Words: *Motivation, Inspiration, Employee Engagement and Public Universities.*

I. Introduction

Transformational leaders have faith in the requirement to change. They at that point articulate a dream of things to come of the firm, and furnish a framework that is reliable with the vision. They at that point encourage the acknowledgment of gathering objectives and offer individualized help subsequently. Thus, adherents of groundbreaking pioneers frequently feel trust and regard towards the pioneer and are roused to accomplish more than they are required to do. Therefore, transformational leaders change the convictions and perspectives of their supporters with the goal that they are eager to perform past the base levels determined by the firm (Aziz, *et. al.,* 2013).

Since the application of transformational leadership to organizational settings over two decades ago, numerous studies have shown that followers of transformational leaders display above average performance (Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011). Still, the question of how transformational leaders elicit performance beyond expectations remains a topic with many theories but few clear answers. An answer to this question may lie in the concept of employee engagement, which refers to a personal investment of the self into individual work tasks that are performed on a job (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010).

A study of Australian manufacturing firms by Department of Industry, Innovation and Science (DIISR) (Green *et. al.,* 2011) found that Australian firms lag behind their international counterparts on human capital management practices. Out of 16 countries, Australia comes in number eight, behind the United States of America, Canada, Germany, Japan, Poland, Great Britain and Sweden. A focus on continually up-skilling workers is important to lift firm performance and address workplace challenges, such as those outlined above, and undoubtedly training will continue to be a critical policy lever going forth. However, the training and education reform agenda is not necessarily the lone solution to lifting workplace performance.

Research by Felstead *et. al.,* (2015) in the 2006 UK Skills Survey similarly found that opportunities for the use of abilities (skills utilisation) and opportunities to use initiative were of central importance to UK employees and ranked higher than good pay, yet these priorities were not being met by employers. This lack of full use of existing skills is partly due to a failure of workplace leaders to effectively engage their employees. This realization that people are not always given the opportunity to contribute to their full potential at work may well be the biggest skills and productivity crisis faced today. Evidence, such as that outlined above, indicates that a market failure exists and that Australian work system designs and management practices are in need of reform.

Bukachi (2009) notes that although leadership has been practiced for long in Kenya, tendencies towards transformational leadership are now high in both public and private organizations. Transformative leadership has been daunted with the task of enhancing goal attainment in the re - engineering of the public sector drawing on the NPM. Although transformational leadership has been found to relate to organizational outcomes, past research has been predominantly on overall transformational leadership rather than its dimensions (Saboe, Taing, Way & Johnson, 2015) and there is lack of understanding on the mediators through which transformational leadership relates to these outcomes (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013).

In Kenyan public service, transformative leadership has been fronted and is daunted with the implementation of public policies, projects and programs. This leadership style is believed to have enhanced public service performance as reflected in the rise in GDP from 1.7 percent after the post-election skirmishes in 2007/2008 to 2.8 percent and then 5.6 percent by 2011 (Government of Kenya, 2013) and further achieve the set vision 2030 for industrialization.Ndisya and Juma (2016) analyzed the utilization of aspects of transformational leadership at Safaricom. The study utilized questionnaire that was structured and 109 respondents were sampled using proportionate stratified sampling technique. The investigation found a positive connection between inspiration motivation and performance of staff. Participants generally concurred with the presence of inspiration to achieve organization objectives and goals, uphold for building of teams, leaders show of the roles the staff ought to do, and helping representatives discover importance in their work. This implies the adjustments in the moving inspiration had critical changes in performance o staff with the end goal that when rousing inspiration expands, there would be a comparative increment in performance of staff. The examination suggested that there is need on the organizational leadership to develop its representatives' reaction to improve administration to the organization. Likewise, there ought to be further study because of transformational leadership on financial performance on other communication service organizations, government and private area.

A high level of engagement in domestic and Global firms promotes retention of talent, foster customer loyalty and improve organizational performance and stakeholder value. Employee engagement is also important. Anthony-McMann, Ellinger, Astakhova, and Halbesleben, (2017) defines engagement as a beneficial two-way relationship where employees and employers "go the extra mile" for one another. According to Tasker, research conducted via the Personnel Today website involving 400 HR professionals, one in four organizations admitted that staff were not engaged, that the situation was worsening, and 44% said that tackling the issue of engagement was an overwhelming challenge. This is a clear indication that the subject has not been systematically researched especially in providing an explanation for the increasing number of reports of disengagement in the workplace.

Nearly 80% of those polled said that unless there are better leaders, the country will decline, and 51% believed the U.S. is already behind other nations. But it is not just political leaders who are failing in the eyes of citizens. Wall Street, media, nonprofits, and others join the school and the church with low confidence of future success. James Mac Gregor Burns cited an April 1992 poll of American people, who were asked: "Does the political system need rebuilding or just minor change?" Fifteen percent responded minor change, 57% responded fundamental change, and 27% responded "Needs complete rebuilding." When that many people call for major change, it says something about the loss of confidence in leadership.

II.   Statement of the Problem

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership that leads to transformation in the opinions and beliefs of followers. The behaviors of transformational leaders result in higher levels of follower commitment and engagement (Brunelle, 2013). The beginning of the era of being accountable was shaped by movement of reforms that began in the 1980s, compelled the need for reforms in the education institutions that included higher learning. Universities today are hoping to be acknowledged for offering reputable innovations, programs, publications, students, research, collaborations, faculties, entrepreneurships and industry linkages through accreditations for example the ISO. In order to realize these objectives, universities ought to transform and issue involving transformation and shift domain in leadership (Aziz, *et. al.,* 2013).

Although relations between transformational leaders, engagement, and performance have been established in previous research (Evelyn, 2015, Ndisya & Juma (2016) there have, to date, no studies that specifically examine the influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement in the Kenyan Public Universities. Though there may be little argument that transformational leaders play a role in shaping the work environment that promotes engagement, much less is known about actual influence of this transformational leadership on the engagement of the employee. Perhaps part of the reason for this lack of understanding is because, as previously noted, leadership is commonly viewed from a macro-level perspective of organizations and firms; hence no attention has been paid to the micro-level processes and influence in the public universities.

According to Kipkebut (2010) employees from private universities were more committed to their universities and satisfied with their jobs than employees from public universities hence turnover intentions among employees in Kenyan public universities is on the increase. According to a study by Halbesleben (2010) daily fluctuations in transformational leadership affect employees' daily work engagement, through employees' daily personal resources (self-efficacy and optimism).

However, if public Universities want to increase employee engagement, leaders in the Universities must understand how to best foster meaning and promote engagement of the employee at the task level. Understanding what creates a sustained level of employee engagement can promote a better understanding of what fosters engagement at an aggregated performance level (overall job performance, group and organizational level performance). The role of the leader in fostering work engagement has received limited research attention. Thus, this study investigated the influence of inspirational motivation on employee engagement in Public Universities in Kenya.

III.   Literature Review

Inspirational motivation emerges from the utilization of both compelling and informative styles of impact. This conduct verbalizes the significance of leaders conveying exclusive requirements to workers, moving and propelling them by giving importance and challenge to the staffs so they can build up a common vision in an organization (Bass & Avolio, 2014). Inspitaional directors adjust individual and organization objectives, thus making the achievement of organizational objectives an attractive means of achieving personal objectives.

Inspiration motivation utilizes conduct to propel and move workers by offering a common significance and a test to the adherents (McCleskey, 2014). The leaders offers importance and challenge that spurs and moves crafted by the workers. In such manner, the leaders advances cooperation, eagerness, and idealism in their devotees by including them in a positive vision of things to come and by conveying elevated standards that supporters need to accomplish (Gomes, 2014).

The individual alignment of necessities with the requirements of a firm is a central technique of inspiration motivation. Transformational leaders endeavor to support the practice of cooperation and duty by explaining the vision, mission and key objectives of the organization and making a solid feeling of assurance among the workers (Renjith et. al., 2015). Inspiration motivation means certainly and emphatically imparting the vision, indicating energy and excitement to make an engaging and persuading vision (Popa, 2012).

Transformational leaders ought to subsequently, carry themselves in a way that insires and motivate the staff (Sundi, 2013). Such conduct incorporates demonstrating eagerness and hopefulness of staff, animating collaboration, recognizing positive outcomes, points of interest, accentuating points, invigorating workers. Inspiration motivation is the degree to which the leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers. Leaders with inspirational motivation challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goals, and provide meaning for the task at hand. Followers need to have a strong sense of purpose if they are to be motivated to act (Welch, 2011). It is also important that this visionary aspect of leadership be supported by communication skills that allow the leader to articulate his or her vision with precision and power in a compelling and persuasive way. Additionally, leaders employ symbols to redirect followers' efforts; they express in a simplistic manner the fundamental purpose of the transformation process, and clearly communicate the accompanying higher expectations.

Inspirational motivation is related to idealized influence but while charisma is held to motivate individuals, inspirational motivation is about motivating employees within the entire organization. Transformational leaders displaying inspirational motivation encourage their followers to become part of the overall organizational culture and environment (Qu, Janssen & Shi, 2015). Leaders with inspirational motivation challenge followers with high standards and provide meaning into their tasks. This might be achieved through motivational speeches and conversations and other public displays of optimism and enthusiasm, highlighting positive outcomes, and stimulating teamwork (Den Hartog, & Belschak, 2012). The followers are willing to invest more effort in their tasks, feel encouraged and optimistic about the future and believe in their abilities.

Inspirational motivation thus focuses on communication of an appealing vision of the future and the use of symbols to articulate this vision (Vincent-Hoper, Muser, & Janneck, 2012). In other words the supervisor is optimistic and enthusiastic about the future thus influencing their subordinates' commitment to the organization. The leader who seeks to motivate will inspire such behaviour by communicating high expectations. The normal standard is thus not acceptable, and by using symbols to focus effort and expressing crucial purposes in a simple way, this leader will develop in his or her followers a higher level of intrinsic motivation (Wang & Howell 2012). A leader who is inspiring will convince his or her followers that they have the ability to achieve levels beyond the possible. He or she will clarify the future state, provide a vision of the future and should therefore elevate the expectations of his or her followers.

The idea of vision, a vital segment of transformation leadership, can be created as a feature of being a transformational leader. Vision is basically an image, target or objective of things to come that is practical, believable and better than the present. The intensity of vision is perhaps the most grounded motivator for change and improvement. The advancement of vision encourages the pioneer to center their supporters and to get their consideration. The vision gives inspiration to the firm (Bae & Hong, 2012).

As per Ruggieri, and Abbate, (2013), inspirational leaders demonstration so that it serves to spur and rouse everyone around them. This is accomplished by giving importance and challenge in the workplace, which creates camaraderie and prompts eagerness and confidence. The essence of this inspiration lies in the pioneer's capacity to stimulate in their supporters the ability to put stock later on and focus on the objectives to really accomplish the vision. Correspondence assumes a significant function in the inspirational cycle, further adding to the transformational measurement. Employee engagement is a matter of concern for leaders and managers in organizations across the globe as they recognize that it is a vital element affecting organizational effectiveness, innovation and competitiveness (Welch, 2011). As mentioned by Lockwood (2007) the number one factor that influences employee engagement and commitment is the manager-employee relationship. She emphasizes that the manager creates the connection between the employee and the organization, and as a result, the manager-employee relationship is often the "deal breaker" in relation to retention. A study conducted in 2006 by Blessing White, a Research Consultancy firm, shows that employees who trust their managers appear to have more pride in the organization and is more likely to feel they are applying their individual talents for their own success and that of the organization.

Employee engagement is a worldwide construct and is researched in the association of commitment of employees, performance and relationship with the firm (Ferguson, 2009). Practice of transformation leadership improves engagement of employees in the work setting that decreases anxiety of worker (Gill, Flaschner, & Bhutani, 2010) stress in the work place assume a negative function in the improvement of workers and performance. At the point when anxiety lessens, performance of worker increments.

Employee engagement and transformational leadership are studied closely with regards to workplace and researches directed on workplace settings. Relationship of employee engagement and transformational leadership are likewise upheld in the writing with profoundly certain outcomes. Transformation leadership creates and improves worker inclusion in the firm (Avey, Hughes, Norman, & Luthans, 2008). Workers contribution demonstrated positive effect on worker execution; worker inclusion is additionally decidedly identified with employee commitment (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004) employee responsibility is emphatically connected with performance of workers as far as more noteworthy responsibility and trust.

IV. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This study sampled 20 Chairpersons of Departments, 5 Registrars of Academic Affairs, 5 Deans of Students, 5 Quality assurance officers and 313 Lecturers. A total sample of 348 respondents were drawn using stratified random sampling techniques from a target population 5 out of the 31 public university that included; University of Nairobi, Moi University, Egerton University, Kenyatta University and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Data was collected using questionnaires and document analysis. Data was analyzed quantitatively by use of mean and standard deviations and qualitatively by regression, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and trend analysis. The results were presented in form of frequency tables.

V. Findings

The main objective of the study was to determine the influence of inspirational motivation on employee engagement in public universities in Kenya. This was done by examining various inspirational motivational aspects that included a finding as to whether university leaders were involved in strategic decision making process. The study analyzed if university leaders share the organization vision to the employees. The existence of high standards of performance in the university was also probed and if the university leadership had inspiration appeals of faith and trust towards the set goals to the employees.

Majority (90%) of the respondents agreed that inspired motivation had other influence in their departments while a few (10%) disagreed to the statement. The respondents explained that the staff who are inspired by their leaders performed better than those who were demoralized. Transformational leaders ought to subsequently, carry themselves in a way that inspires and motivate the staff (Sundi, 2013). Such conduct incorporates demonstrating eagerness and hopefulness of staff, animating collaboration, recognizing positive outcomes, points of interest, accentuating points, invigorating workers.

Table 1 Aspects of the Inspired Motivation

Aspects of inspired motivation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The university leaders are involved in strategic decision making process	425	3.32	1.310	.064
The university leaders share the organization vision to the employees	425	3.52	1.314	.064
There exist high standards of performance in the university.	425	3.46	1.171	.057
The university leadership has inspiration appeals of faith and trust towards the set goals to the employees.	423	3.63	1.148	.056
The university leadership inspires loyalty and commitment to work among the employees in our organization.	425	3.58	1.215	.059
The university leadership displays optimism and enthusiasm.	420	3.61	1.213	.059
The university leadership emphasis on collective team building in our organization.	423	3.65	1.097	.053
The university leadership plans for motivational talks for the employees in our organization.	421	3.63	1.110	.054

From the findings, it was noted that majority of the respondents agreed that the university leaders were involved in strategic decision making process as shown by a mean of 3.32 and a standard deviation of 1.310. A large number also agreed that the university leaders shared the organization vision to the employees as revealed by a mean of 3.52 and a standard deviation of 1.314. Majority of the respondents agreed that there existed high standards of performance in the university as indicated by a mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 1.171. A large number of the respondents agreed that the university leadership had inspiration appeals of faith and trust towards the set goals to the employees as shown by a mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 1.148. Many respondents agreed that the university leadership inspires loyalty and commitment to work among the employees in the organization as revealed by a mean of 3.58 and a standard deviation of 1.215. A large number of the respondents agreed the university leadership displayed optimism and enthusiasm as shown by a mean of 3.61 and a standard deviation of 1.213. Majority of the respondents agreed that the university leadership emphasised on collective team building in the organization as indicated by a mean of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 1.097. A large number agreed that the university leadership plans for motivational talks for the employees in the organization as shown by a mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 1.110.

The findings are consistent with McCleskey (2014) uncovered that inspirational motivation utilizes conduct to persuade and move workers by offering a mutual importance and a test to the adherents. The examination doesn't give different advantages that transformational leaders offer. The leaders offer importance and challenge that persuades and rouses crafted by the workers. In such manner, the leaders advances cooperation, eagerness, and good faith in their adherents by including them in a positive vision of things to come and by conveying elevated standards that supporters need to accomplish (Gomes, 2014). This behaviour articulates the importance of leaders communicating high expectations to employees, inspiring and motivating them by providing meaning and challenge to the employees so that they can develop a shared vision in organizations (Bass & Avolio, 2014). Inspirational managers align individual and organizational objectives, thus making the achievement of organizational objectives an attractive means of achieving personal objectives.

The study tested the effect of inspiration motivation and employee engagement relationship. This was through performing a regression analysis to determine and test the hypothesis for the existence of a link between inspiration motivation on employee engagement. The composite index was computed for attributes relating to inspiration motivation and employee engagement and the hypothesis tested through multiple regression analysis. The first hypothesis claimed that inspiration motivation does not significantly influence employee engagement in Public Universities in Kenya. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Independent Effect of Inspiration Motivation on Employee Engagement

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.563[a]	.317	.315	.59750

a. Predictors: (Constant), Inspired Motivation

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	69.981	1	69.981	196.023	.000[b]
	Residual	151.012	423	.357		
	Total	220.993	424			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee engagement
b. Predictors: (Constant), Inspired Motivation

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.098	.116		18.088	.000
	Inspired Motivation	.443	.032	.563	14.001	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee engagement

The results indicate that there is a relatively strong but significantly positive association between inspiration motivation and employee engagement (R=.563). The coefficient of determination R^2 =.317 implies that inspiration motivation explains 31.7% of the variation in employee engagement in public universities in Kenyan. The other variables in the universities explain the remaining 68.3%. This is an indicator of a weak influence of inspiration motivation on employee engagement.

The analysis from the model had the F value of 196.023 with p-value .000< 0.05, while the results of the beta coefficient showed that a unit increase in inspiration motivation will cause a .443 increase in employee engagement (B=.443, t=14.001, p<0.05). This implies that inspiration motivation are a good a relatively poor predictor of employee engagement in public universities in Kenya. The findings, thus, were sufficient to support the influence of inspiration motivation on employee engagement; therefore the hypothesis (H_0) was rejected.

VI.   Conclusion and Recommendation

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The universities have to put into consideration inspirational motivation an aspect in transformational leadership style since it was found to positively influence employee engagement. The Inspirational Motivation dimension can be practiced through the management behaviors that facilitate a feeling of optimism and a commitment to organizational goals and vision. The leaders should arouse the employees through being visionary, motivational and powerful, confident and captivating. Managers should also continuously inspire their employees in order to enhance their outcomes and enable them achieve organizational goals by challenging them to leave their comfort zones.

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