

Educational Diversity and Employee Performance in County Governments in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of educational diversity on employee performance in the county governments in Kenya. The study is anchored on Human capital theory. The study adopted a survey research design and the target population was 20,299 employees from 5 purposively selected county governments of Kenya. Stratified random sampling was used to sample 392 employees from the selected county governments. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Regression analysis results showed that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between educational diversity and employee performance with the regression coefficient of ($\beta = 0.651$, $p < 0.05$). Policymakers in county governments should set a strong example for diversity in the workplace by having policies that make management accountable for promoting inclusion. In particular, county governments should hire employees based on their accomplishments.

Keywords: *Educational Diversity, Employee Performance, County government*

1. INTRODUCTION

Diversity is an important part of work life that each employee must deal with during their career. Cletus, Mahmood, Umar, and Ibrahim (2018) view diversity as a double-edged sword with both benefits and drawbacks. Diversity has to do with the acknowledgment of a diverse workplace individually and collectively. It is about acknowledging and acceptance of the existence of differences in a variety of visible and non-visible ways. Workplace diversity is a situation where the employee mix in a workplace is heterogeneous in terms of diversity dimensions such as age, education, gender, race, ethnicity, and others (Rakhra, 2018).

Employee performance is the set of employee behaviour, results, and outcomes that come after completing the job tasks using certain competencies and that are measured through different metrics. The most value-adding possession available to any firm, business, or organization is its workforce. The performance of part of the workforce is the driving force behind the survival of any business firm. Further, these authors are of the view that well-performing employees contribute to the efficiency and success of the organization. Therefore, employee performance is crucial for organizations and making strategies to improve organizational performance. Mubarok and Bandawiti (2021) stated that employee performance is measured against the performance standards set by the organization. Several measures can be taken into consideration when measuring performance for example using productivity, efficiency,

effectiveness, and quality and profitability measures. As noted by Lemunen (2022) it is the responsibility of the company managers to ensure that the organizations strive to and thus achieve high performance levels.

Employees with diverse educational backgrounds promote higher levels of consistency, and creativity because of their unique perspectives. Different minds are necessary to solve complex problems because multiple perspectives create the potential for more lucrative solutions. There are more cross-training opportunities available with educational background diversity in the workplace (Dahanayake, 2020). Educational diversity is the set of skills and competencies, level of education, and task-relevant knowledge that an employee acquires as a result of his educational background, on the job through training and experience, which increases that employee's value in the marketplace. Educational diversity is the skills, experience, and technological know-how possessed by employees of an organization applied to influence the production and performance of the said institutions.

Although County Governments have invested heavily in staff empowerment strategies since inception, including training at the Kenya School of Government and benchmarking activities, the effect on employee performance remains ambiguous (Auditor-General Report, 2018). It is further noted that since the adoption of devolved governments in Kenya in 2010 and the Cohesion Acts of 2008, the goals of the aforementioned which are hinged on employee performance remain largely unmet.

1.1 Problem Statement

According to a COG Statutory Annual Report (2018), the key challenges faced by county governments include weak performance management framework leading to subjective performance appraisal, setting ambitious targets that are not achievable, incomplete and poorly implemented gender policy, undeveloped persons with disability policy, and lack of training and capacity building of persons with disability. Auditor General Report (2018) reported that even though Kenya County governments have invested heavily in staff empowerment strategies, these have not resulted in improved employee performance. The public domain has been occupied with the inefficiency and low output that the county government employees exhibit. County government employees have been in the media for all the wrong reasons ranging from strikes, slows and absenteeism from work thus affecting their performance (Aljazeera, 2017).

Although performance aimed at achieving targets at the county governments is only attainable through a committed workforce, there is scant available evidence of workplace diversity in county governments in Kenya and how they influence employee performance in these devolved units. This study sought to fill the gap by focusing on the influence of educational diversity on employee performance in county governments in Kenya.

1.2 Research Hypothesis

H₀: Educational diversity has no significant influence on employee performance in county governments in Kenya.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Human capital theory was proposed by Schultz in 1961 and later developed extensively by Becker (1964), and its origin can be traced to macroeconomic development theory. The theory proposes that education or training increases the productivity of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills, hence raising worker's future income by increasing their lifetime

earnings. The theory explains that the different levels of investment in education and training of an individual can be explained in terms of their expected returns from the investment (Human capital theory, 2017).

According to Georgiadis and Pitelis (2016), it has been long understood by researchers that human capital, especially one's education and training, plays a key role in both employee and firm performance (Becker 1993, Mincer 1974). A lot of the contemporary literature on training and development observes a positive relationship between individual performance and firm performance. Direct expenses such as tuition and forfeited earnings render investment in education and training an expensive undertaking. It is therefore only those individuals who will be compensated by sufficiently higher lifetime earnings who will choose to invest. Individuals who expect to work less in the labour market and have fewer labour market opportunities such as women and minorities are less likely to invest in human capital (Teixeira, 2014).

Building on this, some economists have affirmed that other things being equal, investment in education and training is antecedent to the degree of personal income. The major concern of HCT is the significance and importance of knowledge, skills, and abilities of the employees in an organization and in the contribution and necessary support an employee has in assisting the organization to achieve its set goals and objectives thereby enhancing its capability and furthering enhanced productivity. In reality, no organization can achieve its objectives and set goals without the input of human resources, most especially the diverse employees with diverse educational backgrounds necessary for effective and efficient production (Almendarez, 2011).

This theory, however, has been criticized since the marginal growth witnessed in health, housing, and roads are as a result of more education and not that education contributes to the growth (Blaug, 1987). Similarly, the increased productivity cannot be the function of HCT but rather the "imperfect structure and functioning of the labor market which is a factor in labor supply" (Human Capital Theory, 2017). This theory supports the variable educational diversity by shedding light on how educational diversity in employees induces the employees to be more efficient and effective in the performance of duty thereby enhancing the employee performance.

2.2 Empirical Review

Individuals forming organizations possess varied sets of educational qualifications, skills and competencies, and task-relevant knowledge as a function of their educational background, which constitute educational diversity. An individual's expertise is brought about by one's education among several other sources of knowledge. Individuals whose training, experience, and education are not adequate for specific jobs or positions miss out on recruitment. Therefore, education is more important for employees since without sufficient educational background individuals are not able to secure employment and perform well (Khan, Sohail, Sufyan, Uddin & Basit, 2019).

Leaders in organizations implement educational diversity to motivate employees to perform work effectively. An employee's educational background is an ideal indicator of their knowledge skills and capability (Jayawardana & Priyashantha, 2019). Some level of education and training is needed for one to become an employee of any organization. Should the level of education, training, and experience be considered inadequate, prospective employees are rejected by prospective employers (Hoffman, 2014). The importance of education cannot be overemphasized when it comes to the workplace and its environment, more importantly when the focus is productivity when good and acceptable performance is required as an output. So,

educational background is very critical to the employability of any employee (Kyalo & Gachunga, 2015).

In the same vein, empirical studies on educational diversity have been enormous. Regrettably, the findings of these studies have been fragmented and facing opposing directions. In Spain, a study was done among nonfinancial firms representing 32 industries on nationality diversity and performance found that educational diversity negatively and significantly influences employee performance (Fernández & Gaite, 2020), a study that sought to find out the relationship between informational diversity (which was measured by work, tenure, functional educational specialization diversity), social diversity (which was measured by age and sex diversity) on individual performance (which was measured by task and creativity) among 127 employees from 6 firms and 104 part-time students, in the technology sector, using correlation, hierarchical linear modelling regression, Poisson model, found out that informational diversity positively influences individual task and creative performance by increasing network ties (Zhang & Huai, 2016).

An employee's level of productivity is hinged on the employee's education and training level (Barrington & Troske, 2001). Giving strength to this point is the assertion of Benschop (2001) and Harrison and Klein (2007) that an increase in the number of graduates in a city results in an increase in the levels of higher wages. Economic growth is raised when the percentage of educated workers in a city is high (Christian, Porter & Moffitt, 2006; Inmyxai & Takahashi, 2010). Employees with higher levels of education exhibit higher productivity (Emiko & Eunmi, 2009). Educational diversity is also beneficial for firm productivity and wages (Garnero, Kampelmann, & Rycx, 2014).

Based on the discussion above, the relationship between educational background and educational diversity on employee performance has been examined. Previously the attention has been on other sectors such as education and banking with scanty empirical research on the devolved Kenyan county government. In view of this, this study will assess the influence of educational diversity on employee performance in selected Kenyan County governments.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design and the target population was 20,299 employees from 5 purposively selected county governments of Kenya. Stratified random sampling was used to sample 392 employees from the selected county governments. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics including proportions, mean and standard deviation was used to analyse data. Further, regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between the study variables. The findings of the study are presented in tables.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics for Educational Diversity

One of the key objectives of this study was to establish the influence of educational diversity on the performance of employees in the county governments in Kenya. To answer this objective, several questions were asked. First, the respondents were asked to indicate their extent of agreement on various statements regarding the influence that educational diversity had on the performance of employees. Various responses were provided as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Educational Diversity

	N	Not sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
The recruitment plan of the organization is based on the educational qualification of the employee	297	14.8	15.2	17.8	27.9	24.2	3.3165	1.37822
Promotions are based on academic qualification	297	10.4	15.8	24.6	29.6	19.5	3.3199	1.24745
There is an academic improvement program in the county government	297	11.1	16.2	20.9	27.6	24.2	3.3771	1.30974
Many employees prefer to continue in the service of this county because of its friendly approach in dealing with staff with different educational qualifications without discrimination	297	8.4	16.8	21.2	29	24.6	3.4444	1.2592
Skills and competencies are a major consideration in promotion and career progression in the organization	297	9.1	15.5	19.2	29.3	26.9	3.4949	1.28432
There are opportunities for in-service training to enhance skills and competencies	297	9.8	8.4	26.3	32	23.6	3.5118	1.21673
I can apply my skills and competencies to solve problems	297	7.1	10.8	20.2	36	25.9	3.6296	1.18159
I know how to plan my department's operations	297	4	9.8	23.2	33.7	29.3	3.7441	1.10367
I know what I must do to accomplish my tasks	297	4.4	10.4	18.5	37	29.6	3.771	1.11566
Experience at this job has enabled me to accomplish my objectives	297	7.1	7.1	18.5	34.7	32.7	3.7879	1.17926
Aggregate Mean Score							3.53972	1.227584

From the results of the findings indicated in Table 1, 24.2% strongly agreed, 27.9% agreed and 14.8% were not sure that the recruitment plan of the organization is based on the educational qualification of the employee. The scaled mean was 3.3 ($\mu= 3.3$) with a standard deviation of 1.38. This means that the data was spread around the mean and the respondents moderately agreed to the statement. From the analysis, 29.6% of the respondents agreed with the statement that promotions are based on academic qualifications. 19.5% of the respondents also agreed strongly with the statement whereas 10.8% were not sure.

The scale mean was 3.3 ($\mu= 3.3$) with a standard deviation of 1.2. This means that the data was spread across the mean. This implies that almost half of the respondents agreed with that statement. From the analysis, 32% of the respondents were positive about the statement that there are opportunities for in-service training to enhance skills and competencies. On the other hand, 9.8% were not sure whereas the remaining 26.3% disagreed. Even though some employees appreciated the training opportunities accorded by the county governments, some felt that the training was only tailored to the specific county needs and not for the larger market. The scale mean was 3.5 ($\mu= 3.5$) with a standard deviation of 1.2. The study findings indicate to a large extent that respondents agreed that educational diversity influenced employee

performance in county governments in Kenya. These findings are a true reflection of a study by Lemunen (2022) who found that educational diversity had a significant influence on employee performance.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics on Employee Performance

This subsection is concerned with the investigation of employee performance in county governments of Kenya. The findings presented in Table 2, 3, and 4, represent the respondents' responses to the indicators of employee performance adopted for this study that is attendance, target realization, and responsiveness.

Table 2: Attendance

	N	Not sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
There are biometric controls to ensure timely attendance in my county	297	15.5	22.9	13.5	26.3	21.9	3.1616	1.40251
I can use the working hours with high productivity	297	4.7	12.1	19.2	38	25.9	3.6835	1.12444
There is recognition and reward for employees with the highest efficiency	297	9.1	14.8	20.5	32	23.6	3.4613	1.25176
The strategies to reduce absenteeism in my county have worked	297	9.4	12.1	19.9	32.7	25.9	3.5354	1.25725
Aggregate Mean Score							3.46045	1.25899

From Table 2, 48.2% of the respondents agree that there are biometric controls to ensure timely attendance in my county. However, 51.9% either disagree or are unsure whether such controls exist. The mean was 3.1 with a standard deviation of 1.4. 55.6% of the respondents agree that there is recognition and rewarding of employees with the highest efficiency while 23.9% either strongly disagree or are unsure about it, with a mean of 3.5 and a standard deviation of 1.2.

Table 3: Target realization

	N	59% and below Poor Performance	60%-79% Fair Performance	80%-99% Good Performance	100% Very Good Performance	101% Excellent Performance,	Mean	Std. Deviation
1st Quarter Report	297	5.4	31.6	37.7	16.5	8.8	2.9158	1.02155
Mid-year review	297	5.1	26.6	43.1	17.5	7.7	2.963	0.97709
3rd Quarter report	297	4	23.6	43.4	20.2	8.8	3.0606	0.97418
End year appraisal	297	5.4	19.5	35.4	26.6	13.1	3.2256	1.07472
Aggregate mean score							3.04125	1.011885

According to Table 3 above, 94.6% of employees achieved fair to excellent performance ratings in the first quarter. Only 5.4% were rated below performance. The majority of the employees were rated good performance in the 1st quarter. The pattern is reflected in the end-of-year appraisal where 13.1% achieved excellent performance, 26.6% with very good performance, and 35.4% with good performance. A small 5.4% performed below poor of less than or equal to 59%. The Aggregate mean was 3.04 and a standard deviation of 1.01. The study findings showed that the county government employees reported that their net target realization showed good performance with a percentage performance of 80% to 99%.

Table 4: Responsiveness

	N	Not sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
The county has a displayed service delivery charter.	297	10.8	12.1	20.5	30.3	26.3	3.4916	1.29217
There is proper queue control to avoid delays in this county	297	8.1	12.8	23.6	35	20.5	3.4714	1.18551
Some processes are expedited to avoid delays.	297	6.4	13.5	21.5	34.7	23.9	3.5623	1.17562
Customers are attended to within 10 minutes of their visit to our offices.	297	8.4	16.2	18.2	34.3	22.9	3.4714	1.24119
All correspondences are responded to within 5 days from the date of receipt	297	8.1	12.1	17.5	35	27.3	3.6128	1.2309
Aggregate mean score							3.5219	1.225078

From Table 4, 56.6% of the respondents agreed that the county has a displayed service delivery charter. A total of 43.4% either disagreed or were unsure whether there was such a charter. The mean was 3.4 and a standard deviation of 1.2. A total of 55.5% of the respondents agree that there is proper queue control to avoid delays in their county. 57% of the respondents agree that customers are attended to within 10 minutes of their visit to their offices. 16.2% strongly disagree with the statement. 27.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that all correspondences are responded to within 5 days from the date of receipt while 35% generally agreed with it. The data mean was 3.5 with a standard deviation of 1.2. The average mean for the variable employee performance was 3.3 showing that the employees disagreed moderately to the statement that workplace diversity influenced employee performance. These findings are in tandem with Khan *et al.* (2019), who found that there was a positive effect of workplace diversity on employee performance.

4.3 Influence of Educational Diversity on Employee Performance

Results in Table 5 of regression analysis showed that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between educational diversity and employee performance with the regression coefficient of ($\beta = 0.651, p < 0.05$). Since the p-value is less than the level of significance the sample data provides sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for the entire population. Hence changes in educational diversity are associated with changes in employee performance at the population level. Educational diversity reported an R value of 0.701 and R² of 0.489 which meant that 48.9% of corresponding variations in employee performance are explained by educational diversity. The results concur with Khan *et al.* (2019)

whose findings revealed that there was a moderately positive and statistically significant correlation between employee performance and educational diversity with ($r=0.481$, $p=0.000$) and suggested that educational diversity can be used to estimate Employee performance.

Table 5: Model Summary for Educational Diversity and Employee Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.701 ^a	.491	.489	.61308

Regression Coefficients for Educational Diversity and Employee Performance

The results in Table 6 show that employee performance had a positive index of 1.135 when educational diversity (X) was held constant. The relationship is significant as the p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level (0.05). The equation for regression of educational diversity on employee performance is shown below:

$$Y = 1.135 + 0.651 X + \varepsilon$$

Table 6: Coefficients results for Educational Diversity and Employee Performance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.135	.141		8.037	0.000
Educational Diversity	.651	.039	0.701	16.873	0.000

ANOVA is a procedure for testing the difference among different groups of data for homogeneity (Kothari, 2014). The purpose of ANOVA is to show the total amount of variation in a set of data broken down into two types, that amount which can be attributed to specified causes. F-test was carried out to test the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between educational diversity and employee performance. The ANOVA test in Table 7 shows that the significance of the F-statistic 0.000 is less than 0.05 meaning that the null hypothesis is rejected and concludes that there is a relationship between educational diversity and employee performance.

Table 7: ANOVA for Educational Diversity and Employee Performance

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	107.010	1	107.010	284.697	.000 ^b
Residual	110.882	295	.376		
Total	217.892	296			

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

This research found a positive relationship between educational diversity and employee performance with a coefficient of .651. This meant that a unit increase in educational diversity led to an increase in employee performance by 0.651. The research also found the relationship is significant ($p\text{-value} = 0.000$; $p < 0.05$), therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. It can then be inferred that educational diversity has a significant influence on employee performance in county governments in Kenya.

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results further confirm that the model fit is appropriate for this data since the p-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05 with 296 degrees of freedom and

F (284.697). This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between educational diversity and employee performance.

These findings are in agreement with Muange (2020) who found that there was a significant positive influence on employee performance resulting from educational diversity. The findings are also consistent with the Human Capital Theory which proposes that education or training increases the productivity of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills, hence raising worker's future income by increasing their lifetime earnings. The theory explains that the different levels of investment in education and training of an individual can be explained in terms of their expected returns from the investment (Human capital theory, 2017).

5. CONCLUSION

It was found that educational diversity had a positive and significant relationship with employee performance in the selected county governments in Kenya. The influence of educational diversity on employee performance was found to be positive. It was further found that the county governments had also put in place guidelines on teaching and evaluating skills and competencies hence ensuring in-service training. The study therefore concluded that ensuring education diversity through hiring employees of a high level of education, level of technical experience, and demonstration of competence and skills contributed to increasing the high performance of the employees. The continuous support of management to employees to increase their educational level through in-service training and support to further education also led to improved employee performance.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Policymakers in county governments should set a strong example for diversity in the workplace by having policies that make management accountable for promoting inclusion. In particular, county governments should hire employees based on their accomplishments.

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