

Effect of Training Programs on Organizational Performance of Meru County Government, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of training programs on the organizational performance of Meru County Government, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design, which enabled assessment of the characteristics of the population. The target population comprised 33 senior-level managers and 677 middle-level employees in 11 departments of the Meru County Government. The study used the purposive sampling method to sample 11 CECs, 11 directors, and 11 administrators, while the simple random method was used to sample the middle-level employees' sample size. In determining the sample size of the population, the Yamane formula was used to arrive at the sample of 251 middle-level employees. The middle-level employees answered the questionnaires, whereas the senior-level management was interviewed. A pilot study was conducted in the Tharaka Nithi County Government. Additionally, the Cronbach alpha method was used to measure reliability. The study assessed content and criterion validity. SPSS software version 24 was used to analyze descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means. Additionally, inferential statistics such as model summary and ANOVA were developed, as well as regression coefficients to determine the model of the study. The correlation coefficient for training programs was $r = 0.501$ at $\alpha < 0.002$ and a 99% significance level, which enabled the study to reject the null hypothesis. It was concluded that training programs were vital towards enhancing the performance of the county government. Their contribution made it possible to transfer skills and knowledge from the management to the staff within reasonable time and environment. The skills transferred enabled them to remain relevant in their industries and professions. That notwithstanding, the number of trainings offered to the staff was still few as compared to the training needs placed by business demands. The study recommends the need for the county government leadership develop an adequate policy framework that would increase the budget allocated to training and development programs that can support employees. Additionally, the departmental managers should encourage the employees to collaborate with their colleagues in gaining peer-related training on operations. The employees are also encouraged to develop proactiveness with regard to seeking information and knowledge from the internet and other external sources so as to become innovative in their roles. They do not necessarily have to wait for formal training in the county government to take place to gain work-related insights.

Keywords: *Training Programs, Organizational Performance, Meru County Government, Kenya*

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1. Introduction

Organizational performance is the ability of the management staff to utilize public resources to achieve the laid-down objectives (Taylor, 2021). It was measured through employee productivity, retention rate, employee diversity, innovation, and job satisfaction. Productivity measures the individual output of each employee after they have utilized the resources of the organization within a specific duration of time. Furthermore, the provision of desired and timely services to the public within the shortest turnaround time is service delivery. Additionally, when customers are content with the service they have received within a particular timeframe, it is customer satisfaction (Caruelle et al., 2023). Further, implementing creative methods of delivering the assigned tasks, particularly through the adoption of information communication technology, is an innovation. Public organizations have been experiencing challenges related to organizational performance on a global, regional, and local spectrum.

Training and development include plans established by the management to instill advanced knowledge and skills in employees as a way of promoting their capabilities to make informed and efficient decisions on the best possible way of delivering the set goals (Obuya et al., 2024). Therefore, the implementation of training and development programs attracts the attention of management in public organizations due to their ability to nurture talent in a dynamic business environment (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Therefore, employees value growth opportunities and are more engaged when they see a clear career progression path, such as the one offered through training and development.

1.1 Problem Statement

Organizational performance of public institutions is highly pegged on the productivity of its civil servants. They are expected to deliver quality services to the public through the support of a reliable employee engagement plan that fosters aspects like training (LaMacchia, 2021). Through this, organizational performance would be enhanced due to increased dedication to various job responsibilities by the employees. However, the low organizational performance, which had negatively affected the morale of the staff, was noted to be caused by a lack of increment in budgetary allocations towards general staff capacity building and engagement programs (County Government of Meru, 2023a). The Meru County Integrated Development Plan [MCIDP] revealed that the county government undertook 400 training programs for all staff within a budget provision of Kshs 80 million in 2023/2024 (CGM, 2023a). However, the number of trainings (400) and budget (Kshs 80m) remained constant in 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 and were also expected to remain the same in 2026/2027 (CGM, 2023a). Comparatively, the number of capacity development and training programs on information dissemination to the public increased from 15 to 20 trainings in 2023/2024 and 2024/2025, respectively, at budgets of Kshs 3 million to Kshs 3.5 million.

1.2 Purpose of the study

To examine the effect of training programs on the organizational performance of Meru County Government, Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀1: There is no significant influence of training programs on the organizational performance of Meru County Government, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Human Capital Theory was developed by Becker (1975). It states that the productivity of people's skills in workplaces was enhanced through individual investments in training, formal education, and other methods. The main purpose of these investment mechanisms was not only to advance their skills but also knowledge as a means of improving their earnings. The theory suggested that training was a critical investment that enhanced employees' skills and competencies. By providing training opportunities, organizations increase employees' human capital, leading to better job performance, higher productivity, and greater employee engagement. According to Obuya et al. (2024), organizations that prioritized training not only equipped their workforce with necessary skills but also fostered a culture of continuous improvement and engagement. Wellness programs represented another form of investment in human capital. By promoting employees' physical and mental well-being, organizations enhanced their overall productivity and engagement. Healthy staff become productive, engaged, and dedicated to their job responsibilities. According to Omolara (2024), organizations that invested in wellness programs reduced absenteeism and enhanced job satisfaction, which ultimately contributed to improved organizational performance.

2.2 Empirical Review

Jinee et al. (2024) assessed how the employee performance in the local government unit, Solano, was impacted by the training benefits provided. A quantitative research approach was utilized in a bid to collect data through questionnaires. The various training metrics observed included attainment of set goals, teamwork, employee feedback mechanisms, efficient processes, and personal academic qualifications. Thirty-four staffers in the municipal budget, treasurers, and accounting offices were included through the inclusion criteria. Jinee et al. (2024) found that when there was training, the participants derived positive benefits for the government organizations they worked in. However, Jinee et al. (2024) noted that the training was not comprehensive, hence calling out for a training strategy that was comprehensive and more inclined towards empowering the staff. Notably, the study by Jinee et al. (2024) did not provide pilot testing of the questionnaire to assess its reliability status.

In addition, Anas (2024) investigated the competencies of the employees in Nigeria's public sector and how they were affected by reforms related to training. Structured questionnaires were used as the primary data collection tool employed on a sample size of six hundred and seventy-two participants. It was thus derived that attitude, skills, and knowledge acquisition were significant. This meant that the reforms established within the jurisdiction of the civil service enhanced the competency level of the staff, thus improving organizational performance in the long run. Nevertheless, Anas (2024) failed to describe the mentorship and coaching programs present as offered by the management and which enhanced the competencies of the staff. Therefore, the current study described various training programs provided in Meru County.

Further, Obuya et al. (2024) evaluated the employee performance in the Nyanza region's county government after orientation training. The various county governments assessed included Kisii, Migori, Siaya, Homa Bay, and Nyamira. There were three hundred and eighty-nine staff members included through a correlation research design. They were then grouped based on their respective counties through a stratified sampling method to have a sample size of one hundred and ninety-nine staff. Questionnaires were used to collect data, which revealed that when there were training programs meant to induct staff, practices that supported

benchmarking, assigning job roles on a rotation basis, and communicating the specific responsibilities of these job roles encouraged the staff to perform exemplarily. Despite the significant results by Obuya et al. (2024), training factors such as refresher courses were not considered, hence creating a gap for the current study.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design, which enabled assessment of the characteristics of the population. The target population comprised 33 senior-level managers and 677 middle-level employees in 11 departments of the Meru County Government. The study used the purposive sampling method to sample 11 CECs, 11 directors, and 11 administrators, while the simple random method was used to sample the middle-level employees' sample size. In determining the sample size of the population, the Yamane formula was used to arrive at the sample of 251 middle-level employees. The middle-level employees answered the questionnaires, whereas the senior-level management was interviewed. A pilot study was conducted in the Tharaka Nithi County Government. Additionally, the Cronbach alpha method was used to measure reliability. The study assessed content and criterion validity. SPSS software version 24 was used to analyze descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means. Additionally, inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation were developed, as well as regression coefficients to determine the model of the study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

The sample size was 33 senior-level managers and 251 middle-level employees who would take part in interviews and answer the questionnaires, respectively. Their rates of participation in the study are as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: *Response Rate*

| Respondents | Sampled | Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|---------|----------|------------|
| Senior-level managers | 33 | 25 | 76% |
| Middle-level employees (Officers) | 251 | 217 | 86% |
| Total | 284 | 242 | 85% |

The results in Table 1 illustrate that 25 (76%) senior-level managers took part in the study, while 217 (86%) middle-level employees responded to the study. This was a combined total of 242 (85%). Based on their participation rates, the study gathered a high response since it was above 80%, which was suggested by Wu et al. (2022). mainly because the inclusion of both senior and middle-level management resonated effectively since they were directly affected by the implementation pattern of employee engagement programs. According to Holtom et al. (2022), the inclusion of accurate respondents who are directly involved in the topic of the study sparks interest in them to fill out the questionnaires, take interviews, or use other methods effortlessly. Therefore, the presentation of the study tools gave them a platform that would capture their feedback, hence addressing their interests. Through such a system, they were able to enhance their respective working experiences based on the final output of publishing the results in a university repository. Additionally, experiencing the transition of different county

government leadership within a spectrum of two years, the study was a timely platform to share knowledge of the intricacies of training.

4.2 Reliability Results

Table 2 shows the results of reliability tests conducted on data collection instruments to ensure that they can be trusted to provide similar results even when used more than once.

Table 2: Reliability Results

| Instrument | Cronbach's Alpha |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Training Programs | 0.852 |
| Organizational Performance | 0.843 |
| Average | 0.848 |

According to Table 2, on average, the Cronbach coefficient is 0.848, which is comprised of individual coefficients such as training with a value of 0.852, and organizational performance with a value of 0.843. A consistent observation with the data was that the Cronbach coefficient value was greater than 0.7 in all the variables examined. This signifies that the data was reliable; hence, the instruments used by the study were considered consistent and complete to enable the users of the information to make human resource decisions that are factual. Cheung et al. (2023) proclaimed the relevance of the Cronbach alpha to promote stability of the instruments through promoting internal consistency of the questions asked.

4.3 Descriptive Results of Organizational Performance

Organizational performance of the Meru County Government was the dependent variable and was measured through the retention rate, employee diversity, employee productivity, innovation, and job satisfaction. The table used an ordinal Likert scale, with 1 representing strongly disagree, 2 representing disagree, 3 representing neutral, 4 representing agree, and 5 representing strongly agree. The descriptive results are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Performance

| Statements N=217 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean | S. D |
|--|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------|------|
| Employee engagement programs positively impact productivity at work. | 9 (4%) | 10 (5%) | 16 (7%) | 110 (51%) | 72 (33%) | 4.18 | 0.88 |
| There has been a high retention rate of workers. | 7 (3%) | 12 (6%) | 101 (47%) | 68 (31%) | 29 (13%) | 3.23 | 1.44 |
| Engagement plans have increased the diversity of staff. | 10 (5%) | 13 (6%) | 98 (45%) | 74 (34%) | 22 (10%) | 3.14 | 1.52 |
| Articulate solutions have improved work processes. | 7 (3%) | 9 (4%) | 11 (5%) | 89 (41%) | 101 (47%) | 4.36 | 0.73 |
| There has been cohesion between the management and the employees | 104 (48%) | 83 (38%) | 15 (7%) | 8 (4%) | 7 (3%) | 2.35 | 1.89 |

As per the results presented in Table 3, 190 (88%) of respondents were in consensus that the articulation of solutions as provided by the management had improved work processes (mean 4.36 and S.D. 0.73). In addition, 182 (84%) of respondents were in consensus that employee engagement programs had positively impacted their productivity at work (mean 4.18 and S.D. 0.88). Nevertheless, 187 (86%) of most respondents disagreed on a mean of 2.35 that there had been cohesion between the management and the employees due to timely payment of salary and remuneration (mean 2.35 and S.D. 1.89).

4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Training Programs

Training programs were measured through on-the-job training, skills improvement, mentorship, refresher courses, and leadership opportunities. Table 4 shows the questionnaire outcome on this variable.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Training Programs

| Statements N=217 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean | S. D |
|---|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|------|-----------|
| I regularly participate in on-the-job training programs. | 8 (4%) | 11 (5%) | 98 (45%) | 74 (34%) | 26 (12%) | 3.42 | 1.37 |
| I have received many training programs provided | 104 (48%) | 89 (41%) | 12 (6%) | 7 (3%) | 5 (2%) | 2.21 | 1.80 0 |
| I occasionally receive mentoring and coaching from senior staff | 13 (6%) | 10 (5%) | 100 (46%) | 70 (32%) | 24 (11%) | 3.15 | 1.42 |
| Leadership opportunities have been helpful. | 5 (2%) | 8 (4%) | 15 (7%) | 83 (38%) | 106 (49%) | 4.19 | 0.92 |
| Refresher courses have updated me with new developments | 6 (3%) | 5 (2%) | 10 (5%) | 79 (36%) | 117 (54%) | 4.35 | 1.83 |

As per the results presented in Table 4, 196 (90%) of respondents were in consensus that the refresher courses they had received from time to time have kept them up to date with new developments in their job (mean 4.35 and S.D. 1.83). In addition, 189 (87%) of respondents were in consensus that leadership opportunities had helped develop their career path and personal development (mean 4.36 and S.D. 0.73). However, 193 (89%) of most respondents disagreed on a mean of 2.21 that they had received many training programs provided by the county government, and they had improved their job-related skills (mean 2.21 and S.D. 1.80).

The results imply that the essence of training programs through rolled-out refresher courses has enabled the employees to comprehend specific industrial trends. This enabled them to prepare adequately by gaining relevant skills and lobbying for personal resources that would equip them to handle any foreseeable work pressure. Comparing this specific finding to Wafula et al. (2024), there was an agreement that adequate preparation to counter the industrial developments was enhanced through training within an organization. In the long run, the employees also indicated that the essence of leadership was a contributory element towards growth in professionalism. This could have been caused by consistent mentorship to ensure

that tasks were delivered on time, thereby enhancing discipline that would be implemented in both professional and personal development.

According to Njuguna and Minja (2023), the impact that leaders have on employees extends beyond the organizational operations since the issuance of instructions, reprimands, and general exposure to growth opportunities enable the staff to develop their mental capacities to handle challenges in their lives. Therefore, the result supports human capital theory by revealing that the productivity of Meru County public staff was improved through undergoing training and leadership processes. Through these mechanisms, the staff were able to learn and gain more skills that benefited their professionalism and personal development.

It was also discovered that training programs provided to the staff were still too few to efficiently support them in improving their job-related skills. The implication was that the staff had to rely on personal efforts to gain advanced skills in their careers through training at external centers of learning, which was costly and required internal motivation. According to Jinee et al. (2024), focusing on training skills equipped the staff with a different set of skills that would build a progressive career that enhanced organizational performance. Nevertheless, when employees noticed that the organization was not committed to this cause, they slowly but surely detached their commitment level to go beyond their assigned tasks. Therefore, when organizations prioritized training, not only did it equip their workforce with necessary skills but also fostered a culture of continuous improvement and engagement (Obuya et al., 2024).

Further, there were interview responses collected in this section. The respondents were asked to describe the various methods used to conduct training for employees. The training methods mentioned included mentorship and leadership programs, on-the-job training, online learning, and in-person learning through the help of an instructor. The mentorship and leadership programs were mainly meant for the employees who had shown great potential and interest in learning the organizational processes. They worked under the leadership of mentors who trained and motivated them to deliver their best. Furthermore, in-job training enabled the staff to gain skills necessary to undertake a specific task in the department through established systems. It involves departmental managers training them to perform specific routine tasks, or when an innovation was introduced in the county government. This form of training was considered relevant to ensure that organizational errors were minimized to the lowest level while taking advantage of scarce organizational resources (Obuya et al., 2024). Additionally, online learning was also another method through which training occurred, especially due to the digital evolution that has been recently witnessed in most organizations. Other forms of training included in-person training where an internal or external instructor offered training to the staff to ensure that they were able to comprehend organizational policies and procedures. As also pointed out by Onduso et al. (2024), it was easier to train employees when they were offered diverse methods through which they could gain meaningful skills. A respondent, '03,' out of the 25 participants, said that

“We offer various training to our staff using different methods such as on-the-job training, online training, and mentorship.”

The interviewees also answered the questions about the mentorship programs present as offered by the management to enhance the competencies of the staff. They indicated that though the mentorship programs that directly benefited the staff had no specific names, the staff were paired by a management member. The purpose of pairing was to ensure that the manager provided personal experiences in management through information sharing, training, and candid discussion on how the employee would be supported. This program promoted inclusivity, with

most employees gaining insights into how management was carried out amid a changing political environment. Other employees noted that the Meru Youth Service Mentorship and Employment Program, though not directly affecting the staff, provided an avenue for the youthful staff to gain mentorship from older staff in the county government. A respondent, ‘9’ out of the 25 participants, said that,

“We encourage the staff to work together with various managers through empowerment programs that randomly pair management teams and staff for mentorship.”

The interviewees explained the non-financial support that the leadership has made towards ensuring that there were effective training programs in two themes that include time provision and an environment that supports growth. On the time provision, the management was very specific on the need for training to take place. They thus offered specific timelines needed for training to take place, and through such allocations, the employees were able to balance work and training without causing inefficiencies in service delivery. Notably, the leadership also encouraged the employee to undergo training by creating a conducive environment that would support this initiative. Such kind of environment, which was either within the county government premises or a designated place, minimized distractions that would normally be associated with the allocation of tasks and noise (Yegon & Mandago, 2024). Emphasis was placed by Apolot and Emuron (2024) on conducting training in a place that had the least movement to ensure that the concentration level of the staff was maximized.

4.5 Pearson Correlation of Training Programs

The study had research hypotheses that stated that training programs, wellness programs, employee feedback mechanisms, and employee involvement in decision-making did not affect organizational performance. Pearson correlation test analysis was used to test the hypothesis as a means of either rejecting or failing to reject it. Table 5 provides the Pearson Correlation Analysis results.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation of Training Programs

| | | Organizational Performance | Training programs |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Organizational performance | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .501 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .002 |
| | N | 217 | 217 |
| Training Programs | Pearson Correlation | .501 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .002 | |
| | N | 217 | 217 |

The general results, as stipulated in Table 5, show that the correlation coefficient for training programs is $r = 0.501$ at $\alpha < 0.002$ and a 99% significant level. Therefore, on the first hypothesis, the study rejected the null hypothesis that training programs did not affect organizational performance. This decision was arrived at since the regression and significance level were greater than 1 and less than 0.05, respectively ($r = 0.501$ at $\alpha < 0.002$). Training was thus noted to have a positive influence on organizational performance. In comparison, Anas (2024) established that when the Nigerian public servants were trained, they were able to attain skills at a positive correlation of 0.59.

4.6 Regression Weights

Furthermore, regression weights were also determined as guided by the model of the study, as indicated: $Y = \beta_i + \beta_1 X_1 + e$. This was where Y = Organizational Performance of Meru County Government; β_i = Coefficients to be estimated; C = Constant; X_1 = Training Programs; e = Error.

Table 6: Regression Weights

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 15.512 | 2.125 | | 7.301 | .000 |
| Training Programs | .243 | .075 | .239 | 3.279 | .011 |

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

According to Table 6, the coefficient for the constant is 15.512, the training program's coefficient is 0.243. The meaning is that one unit of organizational performance was added through $15.512\beta_i + 0.243X_1 + 2.125e$. Additionally, since the significance level of all the variables was less than 0.05, the study concluded that training programs were significant towards organizational performance.

According to Yegon and Mandago (2024), training and development plans are established by the management to instill advanced knowledge and skills in employees. This was a way of promoting their capabilities to make informed and efficient decisions on the best possible way of delivering the set goals (Obuya et al., 2024). Therefore, the implementation of training and development programs attracts the attention of management in public organizations due to their ability to nurture talent in a dynamic business environment (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Notably, employees value growth opportunities and are more engaged when they see a clear career progression path, such as the one offered through training and development.

5. Conclusion

It was concluded that training programs were vital towards enhancing the performance of the county government. Their contribution made it possible to transfer skills and knowledge from the management to the staff within reasonable time and environment. The skills transferred enabled them to remain relevant in their industries and professions. That notwithstanding, the number of trainings offered to the staff was still few as compared to the training needs placed by business demands.

6. Recommendations

The study recommends the need for the county government leadership develop an adequate policy framework that would increase the budget allocated to training and development programs that can support employees. Additionally, the departmental managers should encourage the employees to collaborate with their colleagues in gaining peer-related training on operations. The employees are also encouraged to develop proactiveness with regard to seeking information and knowledge from the internet and other external sources so as to become innovative in their roles. They do not necessarily have to wait for formal training in the county government to take place to gain work-related insights.

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