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Employee Incentives and Employee Performance in the County Government of Kericho, Kenya

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of employee incentives on employee performance in the County Government of Kericho, Kenya. The study was anchored on Expectancy Theory. The study employed an explanatory research design. The target population for this study was all 1368 contracted and permanent employed employees from the various departments in the County Government of Kericho. Nassiuma's statistical formulae was used to obtain a sample of 94 which was then be allocated using proportionate stratified sampling. Simple random sampling was then used on the sample obtained for each county department. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect primary data from the respondents. Before embarking on data collection, the research sought clearance from the university and then obtained a research permit from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The data collection instrument was piloted on 10 respondents (10% of sample size) from County Government of Bomet who did not participate in the actual study. The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using both descriptive (means and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (correlation and regression) with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study found a moderately strong positive correlation between employee incentive and employee performance ($r = .470^{**}$, $p=.000$). The study also found an R-square of 0.221 which implied employee incentive explained 22.1% of variation in employee performance. The study recommends the need for county governments to institute incentives schemes that cater for all cadres of employees while focusing on incentives that are proven to enhance employee extrinsic motivation and thus lead to enhanced employee performance.*

Keywords: Employee Incentives, Employee Performance, Extrinsic Motivation

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Globally, organizations desire to increase their revenues and performance levels however, these organizations can only gin competitive advantage in a highly competitive and dynamic market if their employees are well motivated (Bryson & White, 2019). Employee motivation is thus paramount for any successful business enterprise. Furthermore, according to Munyambu (2021), the long-held belief that are inspired in the public sector to work in the public service due to the desire to serve is no longer tenable and thus public sector organizations must strive to find mechanisms of sustaining a motivated workforce in order to achieve desired objectives. According to UNDP (2020), low morale is widespread in the Kenyan public sector and that 57 percent of employees think their salaries are too low, 19 percent believe they have no opportunity for promotion, 17 percent feel their working conditions are poor and over 6 percent feel their work is unchallenging and demeaning or that they are frustrated by their superiors. These data clearly point toward employee performance challenges in the Kenyan public sector resulting from motivational factors. Employee performance entails the successful accomplishment of tasks based on performance standards while efficiently and effectively utilizing existing resources (Munyambu, 2021). Studies have suggested that there are eight indicators of employee performance including quantity of work, quality of work, job knowledge, creativeness, cooperation, dependability, initiative and personnel qualities (Supriyono&Susmonowati, 2022). The authors suggested that employee performance can be measured in terms of quantity of output, quality of output, timeliness of output, job presence, efficiency and value of the work accomplished. Employee performance in any context can thus be seen as the achievement of specific tasks measured against predetermined or identified standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed (Odigie, Aruge&Orbunde, 2021).However, according to Bryson and White (2019), among the factors why employee choose public sector jobs such as those in county governments relates to the availability of extrinsic motivation.

Extrinsic motivation encompasses rewards that emanate from external sources and can be seen in terms of money, promotions, policies, job security, employee relations, recognition, career opportunities and incentives (Noel, 2019). It can also be seen as tangible remunerations in form of incentives, fringe benefits, security, promotional benefits, training opportunities, service contracts and working conditions that stimulate employee performance (Odigie *et al.*, 2021). In the public sector where extrinsic motivations are often perceived as inadequate, managers should strive address these motivational challenges as they negatively impact performance (Mwangima, 2019). Public sector has traditionally offered some strong extrinsic motivators such as security of tenure, career development opportunities and the pension schemes. However, there are weaknesses in extrinsic motivators such as in equality in remuneration, low recognition, poor career advancement programs, narrow scope of employee relations and a narrow scope in non-monetary compensation (Munyambu, 2021). Hence, understanding the link between extrinsic motivation and employee performance would be important to county governments. Employee incentives refer to the variable rewards granted according to variations in the achievement of specific results (Liu & Liu, 2022). Incentives are thus a stimulus to greater action and may be used by managers to stimulate action or greater effort. Employee incentives vary according to organizational strategies but incentives can be seen as anything which can be given in addition to wages. Employee incentives are therefore tools that enhance employee motivations and can be categorized as financial or non-financial incentives. Besides monetary incentives, internal payment schemes stimulate employee zeal as they guarantee returns for their exemplary performance. Therefore, employee incentive provides a platform through which firms can motivate their employees to improve their performance. As opined by Okoli (2019), incentive programs are put in place by organizations to reward and compensate exceptional employee's productivity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ideally, employee motivation is supposed to be an integral element in enhancing the employee energy levels and thus help enhance employee performance. Furthermore, motivated employees are expected to be energetic which would enhance their performance. Some of the extrinsic motivation suggested in literature include money, promotions, policies, job security, employee relations, recognition, career opportunities and incentives (Noel, 2019); incentives, fringe benefits, security, promotional benefits, training opportunities, service contracts and working conditions (Odigie *et al.*, 2021). However, according to UNDP (2020), low morale is widespread in the Kenyan public sector and that 57 percent of employees think their salaries are too low, 19 percent believe they have no opportunity for promotion, 17 percent feel their working conditions are poor and over 6 percent feel their work is unchallenging, demeaning or are frustrated by their superiors. Furthermore, according to the Auditor General Report of 2020/2021, the same performance trend has been reported in the County Government of Kericho. These data clearly point toward employee performance challenges in the Kenyan public sector resulting from motivational factors.

Various studies have attempted to investigate these extrinsic motivators. On employee incentives (Liu & Liu, 2022; Tafesse, 2019; Ogohi, 2019; Kalaluka, 2020) found that incentives significantly influenced job performance. On job security, global studies (De Angelis *et al.*, 2021; Kim & Kim, 2020) found a significant relationship between job insecurity and job performance. Local studies (Mandago&Anusu, 2022; Nzuki & Langat, 2018) found that workplace security significantly influenced employee performance. On employee relations, studies (Arimie&Oronsaye, 2020; Rwiza, 2020) found that employee relations contribute significantly to employee performance. Local studies (Matolo*et al.*, 2019; Mulunda, 2019) found that employee relations had significantly influenced employee performance. On employee recognition, global studies (Odigie *et al.*, 2021; Yang *et al.*, 2022) established that recognition positively influenced employee performance. Local studies (Kariuki & Kiiru, 2021; Ondhowe*et al.*, 2021) similarly found that employee recognition significantly influenced employee performance. However, these studies did not address employee incentives in the context of county governments. The present study sought to fill this knowledge gap by establishing the effect of employee incentives on employee performance in the County Government of Kericho, Kenya.

II. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Numerous studies have attempted to examine employee incentives and employee performance. For example, Liu and Liu (2022) sought to establish the impact of incentives on job performance, business cycle, and population health in emerging economies in public and private sector hospitals in Shandong, Eastern China. Questionnaires were used in collecting data from 171 doctors and 149 nurses working in both public and private sectors. Their findings indicated that monetary incentives significantly influenced job performance. Furthermore, the study established that transformational leadership had a significant impact on the job performance and business cycle. The study thus concluded that monetary incentives and transformational leadership were significant predictors of job performance. However, their study was undertaken in a Chinese context and did not address other employee motivation initiatives such as policies, job security, employee relations, employee recognition, working conditions among others. Similarly, Tafesse (2019) sought to assess the effect of incentive on employee performance in Lion International Bank, Ethiopia. The study employed quantitative research and targeted 75 respondents using questionnaires through a mix of stratified and simple random sampling. Their study found a high and moderate relationship between financial and non-financial incentives on employee performance. Furthermore, their study found a high positive significant effect incentive schemes on employee performance. The author suggested that in order to improve employees work performance, firms should adopt different kind of incentive schemes, seek and obtain feedback on how employees perceive incentives and develop a sound retention and attraction mechanisms. However, their study was undertaken in an Ethiopian backing context and did not address other employee motivation initiatives.

Furthermore, Ogohi (2019) investigated the effects of incentives on employee's productivity in Nigeria. The study employed a descriptive research design and used questionnaires to collect data. Their study established that there was a positive relationship between incentives and productivity. Further, the study established that another key factor in motivating employees is to involve them in the process aimed at attaining organizational effectiveness because without their co-operation the organization cannot perform. They suggested the need for the establishment of a unit to look at issues of incentives that will enhance productivity. However, their study was undertaken in a Nigerian context which may be different from the Kenyan context and did not address other employee motivation initiatives. Another study by Kalaluka (2020) sought to assess the impact of management incentives on employee's performance, focusing on Simba International School in Ndola, Zambia. The study used descriptive research design and targeted 30 employees. Primary data was collected questionnaires were administered. Their study identified several motivational factors including incentives, recognition, job security, promotion, company loyalty to employees, good working conditions and tactful discipline as influencing employee performance. These motivational factors were found to positively impact on employees' performance. The author suggested that given the poor design of many existing incentive schemes, firms should develop core principles for the proper design of staff incentive schemes. However, their study was undertaken in the Zambian context which may be different from the Kenyan context.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed an explanatory research design. Explanatory research focuses on studying a situation or a problem in order to explain the relationships between variables. Further, explanatory research seeks to explain why a phenomenon is going on and can be used for hypothesis testing. It also allows for inferences to be drawn about associations and causality. For purposes of this study, the target population for this study was all 1368 contracted and permanent employed employees from the various departments in the County Government of Kericho. Using Nassiuma's formula for sample calculation, a sample of 94 elements was obtained. The researcher then used proportionate stratified sampling to allocate the elements in each of the county department. Subsequently, the study then used simple random sampling to select respondents across all county departments from the sample allocated in each county department. Questionnaires were used to collect primary data from the county government employees. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions designed to elicit information from respondents. Before embarking on data collection, the researcher sought clearance from the university and then obtained a research permit from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The researcher then sought clearance from the head of County Public Service Commission to collect data. The researcher then administered the questionnaires while assuring them that their responses from the respondents were to be kept confidential. The data collection instrument was piloted with 10 respondents (10% of sample size) from County Government of Bomet who had similar characteristics but did not participate in the actual study. The data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 23). Tables were then used to present the findings.The assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, normality and multicollinearity were tested before conducting regression analysis.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher issued 94 questionnaires, of which 77 were returned. However, 5 were incorrectly filled and was thus not used in the final analysis. Therefore, 72 were used for analysis representing a response rate of 76.6% which was deemed sufficient for further analysis. Majority of the respondents (79.2%) were male while the female was 22%. The trend was attributed to the existing gender gap across many sectors in Kenya. Further, majority of the respondents were above 55 years (34.7%) while the least age group were 26 to 35 years (9.7%). Cumulatively, 68% of the respondents were aged above 45 years. The study attributed the trend to the stagnation of employment opportunities in many sectors in Kenya. The study also established that that majority of the respondents (56.9%) had a bachelor's degree level qualification. Furthermore, over 79% had at least a university degree. This trend was attributed to the professionalization of most sectors in Kenya and the increase in advancement opportunities across Kenya. Finally, majority of the respondents (40.3%) had over 10 years working experience. Cumulatively, over 70% of the respondents had over 5 years working experience. The fact that all respondents had sufficient work experience implied that they were knowledgeable on issues touching on extrinsic motivation and their individual work performance in the county.

4.1 Employee Incentives and Employee Performance

The findings on various statements on employee incentives and employee performance are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Employee Incentives and Employee Performance

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	StdDev
Our incentive sharing mechanism enhances my overall work performance	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	43 (59.7%)	29 (40.3%)	4.40	.494
In my department, bonuses are paid fairly for extra work, efficiency and achievements	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (11.2%)	41 (56.9%)	23 (31.9%)	4.21	.627
We have structured mechanisms for commission payment for employees surpassing targets	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	21 (29.2%)	28 (38.9%)	23 (31.9%)	4.03	.787
All employees know the available payment schemes relating to incentives	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (11.2%)	34 (47.2%)	30 (41.6%)	4.31	.664
The county also offers mechanism to guarantee employees who seek emergency loans	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (8.4%)	34 (47.2%)	32 (44.4%)	4.36	.635
There are also numerous non-financial incentives for all staff	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14 (19.4%)	36 (50%)	22 (30.6%)	4.11	.703
Both financial and non-financial incentives are provided on merit	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (11.2%)	42 (58.2%)	22 (30.6%)	4.19	.620
Incentives offered by my county enhances my individual contribution at the work place	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (11.2%)	41 (56.9%)	23 (31.9%)	4.21	.627

Source: Author (2024)

From the findings in Table 1, the respondents agreed that incentive sharing mechanism enhanced their overall work performance [Mean=4.40, SD=.494] and that bonuses were paid fairly for extra work, efficiency and achievements [Mean=4.21, SD=.627]. Similarly, the respondents agreed that they had structured mechanisms for commission payment for employees surpassing targets [Mean=4.03, SD=.787] and that all employees knew the available payment schemes relating to incentives [Mean=4.31, SD=.664]. Further, the respondents agreed that their county also offered mechanism to guarantee employees who seek emergency loans [Mean=4.36, SD=.635] and that there were numerous non-financial incentives for all staff [Mean=4.11, SD=.703]. Finally, the respondent agreed that both financial and non-financial incentives were provided on merit [Mean=4.19, SD=.620] and that incentives offered by the county enhanced their individual contribution at the work place [Mean=4.21, SD=.627]. The findings tally with those of Ogohi (2019) who established that there was a positive relationship between incentives and productivity. Furthermore, the findings are in agreement with those of Kalaluka (2020) who identified several motivational factors including incentives, recognition, job security, promotion, company loyalty to employees, good working conditions and discipline as influencing employee performance.

4.2 Employee Performance

The findings in this section involve the measurement of the statements on the dependent variable; employee performance as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Employee Performance

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	StdDev
Staff in my department always complete tasks allocated within stipulated time	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	21 (29.2%)	51 (70.8%)	0 (0%)	3.71	.458
We always strive to achieve set targets at reduced costs as planned	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14 (19.4%)	30 (41.7%)	28 (38.9%)	4.19	.744
We always ensure efficiency in undertaking tasks allocated	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (9.7%)	47 (65.3%)	18 (25%)	4.15	.573

Our outputs have always met desired quality standards	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29 (40.3%)	43 (59.7%)	4.60	.494
We often ensure prudent resource use in all our work activities	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	19 (26.4%)	38 (52.8%)	15 (20.8%)	3.94	.690
Our services are always appraised and have consistently been satisfactory to our end users	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	20 (27.8%)	36 (50%)	16 (22.2%)	3.94	.710
Our staff are creative when undertaking tasks which enhances their individual outputs	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	22 (30.6%)	38 (52.8%)	12 (16.6%)	3.86	.678

Source: Author (2024)

From the findings, the respondents agreed that staff in their department always completed tasks allocated within stipulated time [Mean=3.71, SD=.458] and that they always strived to achieve set targets at reduced costs as planned [Mean=4.19, SD=.744]. Similarly, the respondents agreed that they always ensured efficiency in undertaking tasks allocated [Mean=4.15, SD=.573] and that their outputs had always met desired quality standards [Mean=4.60, SD=.494]. Furthermore, the respondents agreed that they often ensured prudent resource use in all work activities [Mean=3.94, SD=.690], that their services were always appraised and had consistently been satisfactory to end users [Mean=3.94, SD=.710] and that staff were creative when undertaking tasks which enhanced their individual outputs [Mean=3.86, SD=.678].

4.3 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is used to estimate the average relationship between a dependent variable and one or more predictor variables and it provides a mechanism of establishing the parameter estimates. Since the collected data met all the regression assumptions, regression analysis was undertaken and the model summary results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.470[a]	.221	.210	.34607

Source: Author (2024)

From the correlation analysis, it was established that there was a moderately strong positive correlation between employee incentives and employee performance ($r=.470^{**}$, $p=.000$). The moderate correlation and its positive nature implied that higher levels of employee can be achieved if employee incentives deployed by the counties are enhanced. The findings tally with those of Ogohi (2019) who established that there was a positive relationship between incentives and employee productivity. Furthermore, the findings are in agreement with those of Kalaluka (2020) who identified several motivational factors including incentives, recognition, job security, promotion, company loyalty to employees, good working conditions and discipline as influencing employee performance. From the findings, it was established that the R-square of 0.221 implied that the variables explained 222.1% of variation in employee performance. Therefore, other factors not investigated in the present study explained 77.9% of variation in employee. The ANOVA findings were as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2.378	1	2.378	19.854	.000[b]
Residual	8.384	70	.120		
Total	10.762	71			

Source: Author (2024)

Furthermore, from the findings in Table 4, the overall model was found to be statistically significant ($F = 19.854$, $p=.000$). The finding on the overall model thus implied that the fitted model can be used to estimate the relationship between employee incentives and employee performance. The regression coefficients were as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.099	.460		13.260	.000
Employee Incentives	.483	.108	.470	4.456	.000

Source: Author (2024)

From the fitted model, the study established the following regression function:

$$Y = 6.099 + 0.483X_1$$

Where: Y = Employee Performance, X_1 = Employee Incentives

From the model, it can be seen that holding employee incentives constant, employee performance would increase by a factor of 6.099 and a unit increase in employee incentives would cause an increase in employee performance by a factor of 0.483. From the findings of the linear regression analysis, employee incentives (t = 13.260, p=.000<.05], the null hypothesis was rejected and the study concluded that employee incentives have a significant influence on employee performance. The findings tally with those of Kalaluka (2020) who argued that incentives are a key component of motivation that enhances employee performance.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that incentive sharing mechanism enhanced employee overall work performance. It was also concluded that that bonuses were paid fairly for extra work, efficiency and achievements. Literature points towards incentives and its equitable sharing including bonuses availed as being important in enhancing the performance of employees. Similarly, it was concluded that counties had structured mechanisms for commission payment for employees surpassing targets and that all employees knew the available payment schemes relating to incentives. The presence of commission payments based on performance and the knowledge of this presence amongst employees implies that incentives are a significant predictor of employee performance. Furthermore, the study concluded that counties also offered mechanism to guarantee employees who seek emergency loans and that there were numerous non-financial incentives for all staff. Given the economic conditions prevailing in the country, the loan guarantee mechanism ensures that employee can supplement their pay with various investments accrued from their guaranteed loans. The study also concluded that both financial and non-financial incentives were provided on merit and that incentives offered enhanced individual employee contribution at the work place. The use of meritocracy and the clear use of individual contribution in awarding incentives can thus be said to be a significant motivator on employee performance. Finally, it was concluded that employee incentives had a moderately strong positive correlation with employee performance and that employee incentives were a significant predictor of employee performance. The study recommends that since employee incentives significantly contributes to employee performance, counties should institute incentives schemes that cater for all cadres of employees while focusing on incentives that are proven to enhance employee extrinsic motivation and thus lead to enhanced employee performance. Counties can thus use the input of unions in designing better incentive mechanisms.

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