

## Influence of employee training on employee engagement in non-governmental organizations operating in Meru County, Kenya

Leah Wangui Mutumbu, Dr. Guyo S Huka, Morris Kiambi Muketha

Meru University of Science & Technology, P.O Box, 972-60200. Meru, Kenya

### Abstract

Employee engagement is the level of dedication and connection a worker has towards their organization and its values. It is a win-win approach for employees and employers and a key factor for employee's positive contribution towards organizational achievement. On the other hand, Nongovernmental organizations are on the rise at a high rate in Kenya and while research supporting the possible significance of employee engagement is obvious, research regarding how to build employee engagement is remarkably undeveloped in the nongovernmental organizations sector. The study sought to explore the influence of employee training on employee engagement in NGO's operating in Meru County, Kenya. Descriptive research design and purposive sampling technique was used. The study adopted structured close ended questionnaires as research instrument and split halves reliability test technique was adopted. A score of 0.85 was obtained which satisfied reliability test for social sciences. The target population was employees in 26 NGO's operating in Meru County. The sample size was 172 respondents drawn from 3 organizations with a response rate of 72.09%. Regression analysis of the obtained data revealed that an increase in employee training, by one unit would increase employee engagement by 0.363 (36.3%). Chi-square test results also indicated statistically significant relationship between training and employees engagement.

**Keywords:** Employee Training, Employee Engagement, Employee Commitment, Organizational success

### 1. Introduction

Given the growing need for organizational success, many organizations focuses on employee engagement as a promising strategy to increase employee retention and improve productivity <sup>[1]</sup> (Lockwood, 2007). Employee engagement signifies the level of commitment and involvement a worker has towards their business and its values. Engaged employees demonstrate emotional work attachment, absolute commitment, increased efficiency and elevated job zeal. They go extra miles to perform their work and are not likely to leave the organization for another job or take an unofficial leave from work <sup>[2]</sup> (Shuck, Rocco & Albornoz, 2011).

Training is apparently one of the human resource management functions essential for every organization that desires to be dynamic as well as growth-oriented. Training is associated with developing the most superior and engaged workforce for the organization and employees who can accomplish their goals. It facilitates improvement in delivery of services thereby impacting the overall organizational performance since the employee's confidence builds up in the area of training and motivates the employees to be more engaged in their work <sup>[3]</sup> (Paradise, 2008). According to <sup>[4]</sup> Hughes and Rog (2008) training and career development is an important dimension which should be considered in the process of engaging employees since it helps the employees to concentrate on a focused work dimension. By investing in human resources and developing their talents, it gives them a sense of belonging within the organization which in turn promotes employee satisfaction.

#### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Kenya is realizing a robust growth in the number of Nongovernmental organizations. According to the <sup>[5]</sup> NGO

Coordination Board (2011), the sector has been growing at an average rate of 400 Organizations per year since 2010. While research supporting the possible importance of employee engagement is clear in other sectors, research about how to create employee engagement is remarkably undeveloped in the non-governmental organizations sector. The study therefore sought to explore how employee training influence employee engagement in Nongovernmental organizations in Meru County, Kenya.

#### 1.2 Study Objective

To find out the effect of employee training on employee engagement in NGO's operating in Meru County, Kenya.

#### 1.3 Study Hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant influence of employee training on employee engagement in NGO's operating in Meru County, Kenya.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 The Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory proposes that social behavior is the result of an exchange process. <sup>[6]</sup> Saks (2006), explained that obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence. The fundamental principle of this theory is that people make collective decisions based on perceived cost and benefits and as a result prefer to maintain the ones that capitalize on rewards and minimize costs. Accordingly, the way the workers' pay back their organization is through their level of engagement and thus they make up their mind to engage themselves at different levels as an answer to the resources they get from their organization. Hence, employee

engagement consists of a psychological and emotional relationship between employees and their organizations which could result into positive or negative occupation behaviour. From this viewpoint, social exchange theory implies that employees respond to apparent benefits by conducting themselves in ways that profit the business and other workers. Likewise, employees hit back against dissatisfying conditions by engaging in unproductive work approaches like malingering, tardiness or quitting the organization. This is consistent with the description of engagement by <sup>[7]</sup> Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004) as a two-way relationship between the employer and the employee.

## 2.2 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values <sup>[8]</sup> (Sundaray, 2011). Engaged employees are responsible for their business goal achievements, motivates the colleagues and thus contribute to the overall success of the organization <sup>[9]</sup> (Dulagil, 2012). Employee engagement is a sound human resource management approach since employees become acquainted in identifying organizational success as well as their individual efficiency, going beyond the call of duty in performing their roles.

Engagement is a significant factor for organizational achievement and higher performance because of workers retention, loyalty and efficiency <sup>[10]</sup> (Andrew, 2012). <sup>[11]</sup> Dale Carnegie (2012) opine that while there are many research studies that point to the percentage of engaged and disengaged employees few studies have looked at what really drives employee engagement hence there was need to investigate the influence of employee training on employee engagement.

## 2.3 Training and Employee Engagement

Training is a systematic development of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by an individual to perform adequately a given task or job <sup>[12]</sup> (Armstrong, 2012). Training is mainly concerned with the improvement and up grading of the skills and knowledge of the employees which ultimately adds to the job performance. <sup>[13]</sup> Markos and Sridevi (2010), reported that giving employee's appropriate training helps them to update themselves in increasing their knowledge and skills. They further argued that when employees become acquainted with their job, their confidence is enhanced and consequently they are able to work without much supervision from immediate supervisors which results to employee self-efficacy and commitment.

In their study on connecting training and development with employee engagement in telecommunication industry in Pakistan, <sup>[14]</sup> Azeem and Paracha (2013) concluded that there is a relationship between training and development and employee engagement. They reported that training and development activities on stress management, error management, ethics and conflict management had a positive impact on employee engagement. In Malaysia, a study by <sup>[15]</sup> Lai, Lee, Lim, Yeoh and Mohsin (2015) on the linkage between training and development and co-worker support towards employee engagement in hotel industry as well showed a positive correlation between training and development and employee engagement.

In Kenya, <sup>[16]</sup> Brenda, Otieno, Waiganjo and Njeru (2015) in their study on *Effect of Employee Engagement on*

*Organization Performance in Kenya's Horticultural Sector*, they recommended that organizations should emphasize on induction training as it will help in clarifying the roles of employees thus improving the general organization performance. Another study by <sup>[17]</sup> Kemboi and Onyango, (2015) on the relationship between employee resourcing and development practices in public secondary schools in Kenya, they found out that employee training and development policies positively and significantly affected organizational performance. While these studies were carried out in different sectors including horticulture, telecommunications, hospitality and education sector, study in the NGO sector was scanty which prompted the researcher to carry out this study.

## 3. Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population for this study was employees working in 26 non-governmental organizations operating in Meru County and the study used purposive sampling technique to select sample respondents from the target population. The sample size was 172 respondents drawn from 3 organizations who had worked in their respective organizations for at least 3 years. The study used structured close ended questionnaires as research instrument. The questionnaires were pilot tested on 17 respondents drawn from Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) an organization that was part of the target population but not in the sample. The questionnaires were pre-tested to ensure clarity and information validity prior to them being administered. The study adopted Split-halves Method to test reliability and a score of 0.85 was obtained which was adequate for social science research <sup>[18]</sup> (Baker, 1994)

## 4. Results and Discussion

About three-quarter (79.7%) of the research respondents agreed that their organizations provided training that enabled them to learn new skills while 7.2% of the respondents disagreed with same. However, the frequency of the training varied from one organization to the other. The study revealed that 26% were trained once, 18% twice, 9% thrice and 17% more than three times in the last twelve months. On the contrary, 30% of the respondents had not attended any training even though it implies that (70%) of the respondents were taken for a job training at least once in a year.

The study further revealed that different up-skilling strategies were arranged by the organizations to enable employees perform their work better. 48.4% of the respondents indicated that training courses and seminars was regularly arranged for respondents to enable them improve their performance while 33.1% acknowledged having received on-the-job training. Access to mentorship (3.2%) and HR coaching (3.2%) services were not prominent among the list of training components to employees.

The study sought to establish what factors motivated workers to perform better as part of employee engagement. The respondents indicated that confidence in their abilities (33.1%), adequate skills (25.8%) and experience (24.2%) were the key factor contributing to employee engagement arising from training. The respondents were also asked what persuaded them to be engaged in their work. The responses showed that having proper training (36.3%), opportunities for career advancement (32.3%), fair performance management processes (17.7%) and clear organizational goals (11.3%)

ranked top on the persuasive factors.

**4.1 Hypothesis Test**

The researcher tested the study hypotheses in order to accept the null hypothesis or reject the null hypothesis <sup>[19]</sup> (Kothari, 2009). To test this hypothesis chi-square test, ANOVA and regression analysis were used to analyze the magnitude and direction of the relationship at (P<0.05).

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant influence of employee training on employee engagement in NGO’s operating in Meru County, Kenya.

**Table 1:** Employee Training Chi-square Test

Training on employee engagement	
Chi-Square	62.29
Df	4
95% Confidence Interval	.000

The resulting  $\chi^2$  value 0.000 at 4 degrees freedom was less than 0.05 which implies it is statistically significant. The null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that employee training influences employee engagement.

**Table 2:** Employee Training Model Summary

Model		
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
.603 <sup>a</sup>	.363	.336

The regression analysis shows a strong relationship  $r = 0.603$  and  $r^2 = 0.363$  which shows that 36.3% of the change in employee engagement can be explained by training. This concurs with Lai, Lee, Lim, Yeoh, and Mohsin (2015) who found out that 43.66% of the variations in employee engagement could be explained by training and development activities in the hotel industry.

**Table 3:** Employee Training on Employee Engagement ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	40.826	6	8.165	13.472	.000
Residual	71.520	118	.606		
Total	112.347	124			

The ANOVA results indicates that the significance of the F is 0.00 which is less than 0.05 hence implying that there is a positive significant relationship between employee training and employee engagement hence we reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant influence of employee training on employee engagement.

**Table 4:** Employee Training Coefficients

	Coefficients			T	Sig.
	Un standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.462	.398		6.184	.000
Training	.365	.053	-.541	-6.874	.000

The beta coefficient of the resulting regression model, ( $\beta = -.541$ ) which indicates that the beta coefficient is significantly

greater than 0, ( $p=0.000$ ) which is less than  $p=0.05$  the test statistic. This confirms that essentially there is a relationship between training and employee engagement. The results concurs with the results ( $\beta=0.3578$ ) of Lai *et al.* (2015) at 0.001 (<0.001). Table 4 fitted model  $Y = 2.462 + .365 * X_1$ . This means that unit change in training will increase employee engagement by the rate of 0.365

The regression analysis shows a strong positive relationship  $r = 0.603$  and  $r^2 = 0.363$  which shows that 36.3% of the change in employee engagement in can be explained by training. ANOVA and Chi-square test results were also statistically significant at 95% significant level and therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

**5. Conclusions**

The findings of this study conclude that employee training is a prerequisite of organization performance and contributing factor to employee engagement. Spending more on training programs that develop employees’ skills and improve their performance is highly beneficial to the employees and the organization as a whole. Organizations provided training that enabled respondents learn new skills through different up skilling strategies. This had a positive impact on the employee’s engagement levels and further indicated that organization learning is in practice in NGO’s. The researcher concludes that most of the employers would want their employees to benefit from trainings which build their confidence to perform better and different strategies were in place for employees learning with training courses and seminars being the most preferred strategy. It could be further concluded that different organizational developmental interventions strategies are in place for employees to learn new skills in order to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency in job performance. In addition, employees were motivated by different aspects of engagements but self-belief in one’s ability to confidently perform well in an activity was the most important for employee motivation.

Besides, the researcher recommends that organizations should take their employees for trainings for at least once per year. This will aid employees to learn new skills and update their knowledge for better organization performance and also as a mechanism to motivate and improve employee’s engagement. Despite the contributions made by this study, it only highlighted on training as an engagement factor and therefore the researcher recommends that studies by future researchers should focus on other human resource development practices apart from employee training.

**6. References**

1. Lockwood NR. Leveraging employee engagement for competitive advantage, SHRM Research Quarterly. 2007; 52(3):1-12.
2. Shuck MB, Rocco S, Albornoz CA. Exploring employee engagement from the employee perspective: Journal of European Industrial Training. 2011; 35(4):300-325.
3. Paradise A. Influences engagement, ASTD, Training & Development, A HR director’s guide to Employee Engagement. 2008, 54-59.
4. Hughes JC, Rog E. Talent management: A strategy for improving employee recruitment and engagement within hospitality organizations: International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management. 20(7):743-757.

5. GOK. National survey of NGO's report, Government Printing Press, Nairobi, 2009.
6. Saks M. Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. 2006; 21(6):600-19.
7. Robinson D, Perryman S, Hayday S. *The Drivers of Employee Engagement*, Brighton, Institute for Employment Studies, 2004.
8. Sundaray BK. Employee Engagement: A driver of organizational effectiveness *European Journal of Business and Management*. 2011; 3(8):53-59.
9. Dulagil A. The relationship of employee engagement and wellbeing to organizational and student outcomes, 2012. *Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=sbshdr>*
10. Andrew OC, Sufian S. Individual factors and work outcomes of employee engagement. *Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2012, 498-508.
11. Dale Carnegie Training. What drives employee engagement and why it matters. Dale Carnegie Training White Paper. 2012, 1-6. Retrieved from <http://www.dalecarnegie.com>
12. Armstrong M. *A handbook of human resource management practice*, London, free press, 2012.
13. Markos S, Sridevi MS. Employee Engagement: The key to improving performance. *International Journal of Business and Management*. 2010; 5(12):89-96.
14. Azeem MF, Paracha AT. Connecting training and development with employee engagement: how does it matter? *World Applied Sciences Journal*. 2013; 28(5):696-703.
15. Lai P, Lee J, Lim Y, Yeoh R, Mohsin F. The linkage between training and development and coworker support towards employee engagement in hotel industry, *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*. 2015.
16. Brenda B, Otieno A, Waiganjo E, Njeru A. Effect of employee engagement on organization performance in Kenya's horticultural sector, *international journal of business administration*. 2015, 6-2.
17. Kemboi A, Onyango P. Effects of employee resourcing and development practices on organization performance in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub County: *International Journal of Business and Social Research*. 2015, 5-7.
18. Baker TL. *Doing Social Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York, McGraw Hill Inc, 1994.
19. Kothari CR. *Methods and techniques: research methodology*, (2nd ed.). New Delhi: New Age International Publishers Ltd, 2004.