



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN KENYA: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The well-being of the employees and their happiness must be the precedence of every successful enterprise in order to satisfy the customers and achieve the best results. Research has consistently shown that employee engagement is powerfully linked to a range of organizational success factors Worker engagement; emotionally or intellectually is very essential to the success of the organization. The positive feelings that employees experience about their business and employers affect certainly the customer satisfaction in terms of service, loyalty and engagement. Furthermore, engagement can give every employee the feeling to perform in the best way, by learning new skills and completing all the work with innovative suggestions. Organizations measure engagement in different ways that agrees with its nature. Some organizations that have established and carried out efficient employee engagement programs or schemes have enhanced their productivity and performance by more than 20%. In addition, the firms have greatly reduced employee turnover by more than 87%, which shows that employment engagement provides firms with a channel for development and profitability. This study aimed to examine employee engagement and organisational performance in the public sector. The study aimed at reviewing literature from the Kenyan case of employee engagement and how it had affected performance in the public sector. After the presentation at the theoretical framework summarized by a deep literature review, a methodological and empirical posture was elaborated to analyze the factors that influence the employee engagement in the public sector. The paper explored the concept of engagement and why it is important; The research reviewed findings in recent literature about the antecedents and outcomes of engagement (both generally and within public service in particular); Amongst the factors identified in the Kenyan case included; Dedication engagement on organizational performance in the civil service; Vigour engagement on organizational performance, Absorption engagement on organizational performance the moderating role of supervisor's support on the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance in the public sector in Kenya.

Key Words: Employee Engagement, Productivity

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INTRODUCTION

The ability to engage employees and make them work in the business organizations is one of the greatest battles experienced by many global organizations today (Robertson-Smith & Markwick, 2009). Nonetheless, a recent study by the Gallup organization in over 141 countries found out that only 13 per cent of employees worldwide are engaged at their workplaces, over 63 per cent are disengaged while another 24 per cent are actively disengaged (Grabtree, 2013). According to the HR. Com (2018) survey conducted on 717 of its members in the HR related professions worldwide, it was revealed that fewer than 39 per cent of employees are engaged in their organizations, despite the solid evidence that strongly links employee engagement to organizational performance. This scenario is attributed to the senior managers in many of these organizations who do not prioritize employee engagement.

A study by Chelangat (2019) asserts that Organisations want their employees to be engaged, and that there are indicators that engaged employees are more productive (Saks & Gruman, 2014) and there is a link between employee engagement and innovation, quality, discretionary effort, customer loyalty, positive organisational behaviour, profitability, earnings per share and productivity, which is an outcome of the firm's focus on the well-being of employees, which represents an emerging domain of inquiry. A positive fulfilling work-related state of mind characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

In the UK, Employee engagement is now receiving increasing attention from management and workplace learning scholars (Shuck & Rocco, 2014). Research in India found that individuals seek more meaning in their daily operations than they do in their personal lives (Chelangat, 2019). Employee engagement is an important and critical element for

the success of organisations. Managers should strive to make work meaningful by ascertaining and endeavouring to resolve any difficulties that employees face (Muduli, Verma & Datta, 2016).

According to Chelangat (2019), while many organisations emphasize the promotion of engagement among their workforce, few studies inform human resource development (HRD) professionals how they can increase employees' work engagement (Shuck Rocco, 2014). Engagement is defined as the extent to which employees are physically, emotionally, and cognitively attached to their work. Engaged employees are strongly enthusiastic about their work and function as a critical source of inspiration for others (Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey & Saks, 2015).

Furthermore, in a rapid cycle economy as the one experienced in Kenya today, leaders of various organizations know that to have a high-performing workforce can be very essential for the organizational performance (Kazimoto, 2016; Sundaray, 2011; Bakker & Bal, 2010; Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). They recognize that a highly engaged workforce can increase innovation, productivity, and the bottom-line performance while reducing the costs related to the hiring and retention in a highly competitive talent market (Harvard Business School, 2014; Soane 2013; Schaufeli, 2013; Hakanen & Schaufeli 2012; Christian, Garza & Slaughter 2011). Therefore, employee engagement has emerged as a potential factor for organizational performance in many countries and workplaces (Al-dalhameh, Masa' deh, Abu Khalif & Obiedat, 2018; Kazimoto, 2016; Harvard Business School, 2014) including the civil service sector in the county governments in Kenya.

As a potential factor, employee engagement is said to achieve its objectives through the constructs of vigour, dedication and absorption types of engagement (Al-dalhameh *et al.*, 2018). Dedication

engagement is characterized by a strong sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, purpose and challenge toward accomplishing goals (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2009) and resembles involvement of employees in the organizational activities. A dedicated employee is a strongly involved one in his or her work and experiences a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. On the other hand, vigour type of engagement has been found to be associated with increased energy, mental resilience and individual effort that can be invested in one's work (Maricutoiu *et al.*, 2017) and remaining persistent even when faced with difficulties (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010).

Furthermore, absorption engagement is the experience of being deeply immersed in one's work when the individual finds it difficult to detach himself or herself from what he or she could be working on (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2008). It refers to being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work and as time passes, one finds it difficult to detach (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, it can be concluded that engaged employees will want to succeed, feel compelled to strive towards challenging goals, and commit personally to attaining such goals for the organization.

Some researchers have found out that there is a direct relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance (e.g. Datche & Elegwa, 2015; Shantz, Alfes, Truss & Soane, 2013). For instance, Christian, Garza and Slaughter, (2011) found out that employee engagement has empirically been associated with higher levels of in-role and extra-role performance among employees. On the contrary, other researchers have also found that the correlation between employee engagement and organisational performance is weak partly because engagement does not affect organisational performance directly but do so through other

variables which directly predict organizational performance (Shantz *et al.*, 2013; Chughtai, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The management of public resources, including the human resources has not been very efficient (Chege, Muathe & Maina, 2017; Mugo, Wario & Odhiambo, 2014; Juan, 2010; World Bank, 2004). Consequently, there has been a decline in the performance of the civil service sector. One of the main reasons for such a decline has been the decline in employee engagement at the workplaces (Omolo, 2012; Edwards & Peccei, 2007). Accordingly, Many employees are unable to take on extra duties (Human Resource survey report of 2016), which leads to the decrease in performance levels of counties in terms of customer service, employee productivity and revenue collections (HR survey report, 2016; Oluseyi, Kayode & Morton, 2017; Lee & Galpin, 2010). Organizations world over are said to lose between 5%-15% of their sales revenue as a result of their lack of attention to employee engagement (Juan, 2010; Edwards & Peccei, 2007). Incidentally, many studies have been carried out on the relationship between employee engagement and some organizational outcomes (e.g. Al-damaheh *et al.*, 2018; Kazimoto, 2016; Devi, 2017; Truss & Soane, 2013; Gullup, 2013). Despite the continued evidence showing the link between employee engagement and such outcomes, a dearth of information concerning the influence of vigor, dedication and absorption types of employee engagement on organizational performance still exist (Mohammed *et al.*, 2015). Accordingly, the rapid expansion of interest in employee engagement is just beginning to be witnessed (Truss & Soane, 2013; Rurkkhum & Bartlett, 2012; Sonnetag, 2011) and this calls for a critical scrutiny of the concept as a predictor for organizational performance (Guest 2013; Jenkins & Delbridge 2013; Keenoy 2013; Purcell 2013). Consistently, Schaufeli, (2013) opined that the link between employee engagement and performance outcomes can be a very fruitful avenue

for future research endeavor since employee engagement constructs (vigor, dedication and absorption) and performance relationships are always susceptible to some influence (Shuck's, 2011). According to Wachira (2013) employee engagement has a significant influence on organizational commitment. Other studies have also linked employee engagement to organizational performance with a positive and significant influence (e.g. Chege *et al.*, 2017) while a few others have inconsistently found a negative and insignificant relationship between the two variables (e.g. Odhong *et al.*, 2014). Nonetheless, there is also scanty empirical literature on the moderating influence of the supervisor support on the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance (Kim, Kolb & Kim, 2012). Hence, this study will also seek to investigate whether supervisor's support can systematically change the influence of employee engagement on organizational performance levels. According to Namazi and Namazi (2015), the potent way of enhancing the research designs, and hence provide a more realistic and accurate finding, is to insert the most appropriate moderating variable that relates to the research study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Engagement

As Kangure (2014) notes, there exists agreement that Employee engagement is defined as being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort and experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to others (Alfes *et al.*, 2010). Engagement is composed of three dimensions which include intellectual engagement (thinking hard about the job and how to do it better), affective engagement (feeling positive about doing a good job) and social engagement (actively taking opportunities to discuss work related improvements with others (Cavanagh & Virdie, 2007).

Engagement therefore has intellectual, emotional and behavioral dimensions (Kangure, 2014).

Choo, Mat, & Al-Omari (2013) note that, there are three categories of employee engagement. The first category is composed of engaged employees. These are employees who want to know the desired expectations for their role so they can meet and exceed them. They are naturally curious about their company and their place in it (Choo *et al.*, 2013). They perform at consistently high levels. They want to use their talents and strengths at work every day (Anitha, 2014). They work with passion and they drive innovation and move their organization forward.

The second category is composed of employees who are not engaged (Baltoni, 2013). These are employees who tend to concentrate on tasks rather than the goals and outcomes they are expected to accomplish. They want to be told what to do just so they can do it and say they have finished (Lange, Witte & Notelaers, 2014). They focus on accomplishing tasks versus achieving an outcome. Employees who are not-engaged tend to feel their contributions are being overlooked, and their potential is not being tapped (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2010).

According to Fearon *et al.* (2013) not engaged employees often feel this way because they don't have productive relationships with their managers or with their coworkers. The third category is composed of actively disengaged employees. These are employees who are consistently against virtually everything (Bakker *et al.*, 2014). They are not just unhappy at work but they are also busy acting out their unhappiness. They sow seeds of negativity at every opportunity (Deery, 2008). Every day, actively disengaged workers undermine what their engaged co-workers accomplish.

Sendawula, Kimuli, Bananuka & Muganga (2018) note that the phenomenon of employee performance is a multidimensional construct and an extremely vital

criterion for determining organizational success or failure. They further note that Employee engagement has been conceptualized in different ways, for example, according to Men (2015), it is the positive attitude held by the employees toward the organization and its values. The level of employee performance is highly determined by the level of commitment an employee has toward their organization and its values (Selvarasu & Sastry, 2014). An engaged employee is aware of business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization (Ologbo & Sofian, 2013). According to Men (2015), engagement is characterized by energy, absorption, involvement, efficacy, vigor, dedication, enthusiasm and a positive state which are described as catalysts for employee performance. According to Shantz, Alfes, Truss, & Soane, (2013), engaged employees have a positive attitude and have work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption and these make the employees psychologically present at work, which minimizes their possibility to do work related mistakes and errors. Gichohi (2014) explains that there is positive relationship between employee engagement and employee performance through increased commitment and this is because, engaged employees experience positive emotions which broadens their thinking, leading them to become more attentive and absorbed in their work. (Shantz *et al.*, 2013).

A growing body of evidence in the public and private sector has shown a strong relationship between high levels of employee engagement and improved organizational performance across the globe (e.g. Al-dalahmeh *et al.*, 2018; Devi, 2017; Kazimoto, 2017; Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes & Delbridge, 2013; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). However, the state of employee engagement in many of the world organizations has been found to be on the decline (Makhanu, Mukanzi & Eshiteti, 2018; Datche & Elegwa, 2015; Shuck, Rocco, Carlos & Albornoz, 2011). Although the

concept is receiving deserving attention in the global academic literature, the practice of employee engagement has declined and there is a deepened disengagement among employees in a number of organizations today (Shuck *et al.*, 2011).

In the Asian academic literature, employee engagement concept is said to receive deserved attention. Ahlowalia, Tiwary and Jha (2014) opine that the concept of employee engagement is fast gaining acceptance in many companies in Asia Pacific in an attempt to improve the human resource performance. Most organizations here, are instituting measures to raise engagement levels. This is supported by the Hay Group (2013) and Hewitt Associates (2014) employee engagement report which revealed that employee engagement had risen to 64% in 2012 among companies in the region. However, according to the same report, a country level analysis indicated wide variations in the levels of employee engagement. For instance, India and Japan witnessed some slight improvement in employee engagement, whereas Singapore and Hong Kong indicated that their levels of employee engagement remained unchanged for the year under review.

Nevertheless, recent reports by the same organizations indicate that Asia Pacific witnessed a rise in engagement levels.

On the contrary, a survey conducted in Thailand in 2015 revealed that only 12 per cent of Thailand's employee population are 'engaged', 82 per cent are 'actively disengaged' and 6 per cent are totally disengaged. Similar Gallup studies have found the levels of engagement in Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and Singapore to be 18 per cent, 12 per cent, 9 per cent, 17 per cent and 9 per cent respectively (Gallup, 2014). In the USA, North American organizations are among the leading in levels of employee engagement at 65% (Gallup, 2014). However, although Latin America had been reported to be the leading at 70% earlier on, the trends had

started shifting and employee engagement is now on a fast decline (Hewitt Associates, 2014). In Europe, Scholars have advocated for the development of the concept of employee engagement into a major science in order to improve the HRM theory and practice (Truss *et al.*, 2013). This is so because Europe is one continent with the least engagement levels at 57% (Hewitt Associates report, 2014).

In Africa, the picture about employee engagement is still not clear, and the academic as well as practitioner's literature is very scanty although there are sporadic reports of high employee engagement by consultants. For example, Aon Hewitt, Emergence Growth and Open Symmetry consultancies in a survey in 2013 involving 300,000 employees in three regions of Sub Sahara Africa indicated high engagement levels of 74 % for East Africa, 68% for South Africa and 70% for Southern Africa. According to Hewitt Associates (2014), Africa and the Middle East has jointly been reported to have had a shared growth in levels of employee engagement of 61% as at 2013. However, these statistics could be misleading since various countries are independently unique in the manner in which they engage their workforce. According to Agyemang *et al.*, (2013) there are disparities in levels of employee engagement between the public and the private sector in Ghana.

Employee Engagement in Kenya

Despite the apparent compelling arguments for employee engagement as a new frontier towards organizational effectiveness, Africa and Kenya in particular still lack behind in empirical studies on the subject (Makhanu *et al.*, 2018). In practice, employee engagement still ranks as the most urgent trend to address with the largest capability gap of 28 per cent (Deloitte, 2014). Because of this trend, senior management and other specialized skill sets are increasingly rarer to come by in the Kenyan job market. Consequently, there is limited supply of people with the required skill sets to take on senior management roles and positions. For instance, in UAP

Insurance, the company has put in measures of employee engagement at the corporate level, however this is not replicated in all its branches country wide (Nduru, 2014). Therefore, the company still experiences lots of challenges with regards to employee engagement strategies. On the overall, employee engagement is a serious challenge to many other organizations in Kenya today (Makhanu *et al.*, 2018; Deloitte, 2016; Mohammed *et al.*, 2015; Datche & Elegwa, 2015).

On the other hand, Kenyan researchers have also reported some semblance of employee engagement in the private sector (Mokaya & Kipyegon, 2014), with other researchers reporting a moderate level of employee engagement in some of the state agencies (Kangure, Wario & Odhiambo, 2014). However, this engagement has also been linked to improved organizational performance besides other positive job outcomes (Rich *et al.*, 2010). On the contrary, Odhong, Were and Omolo (2014) investigated the effect of human capital management drivers on organizational performance in Kenya, a case of investment and mortgage limited bank, with employee engagement as one of the constructs. The findings revealed that employee engagement has a negative and significant effect on organizational performance. This was inconsistent with the findings of Susi and Jawaharrani (2010) who found out that disengaged employees tend to feel that their contributions are being overlooked, and that their potential is not being tapped, leading to the decline in organizational performance (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2010).

Independent Variables

Vigor Engagement

Vigor engagement is the high energy, resilience and a willingness to invest effort on the job, the ability not to be easily fatigued, and the persistence when confronted with challenges or obstacles (Obeidat, 2016; Shantz *et al.*, 2013). It is about the presence of

four factors namely; high energy levels; mental resilience; willingness to invest effort; and the persistence in the face of challenges. All these factors are required in order for an individual to show vigor while performing a certain job (Obeidat, 2016; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Shirom, 2010).

As a construct of employee engagement vigor has been found to possess both positive and negative correlation with organizational performance by a number of researches. In an exploratory study, Obeidat, (2016) sought to establish the relationship between corporate responsibility, employee engagement and organizational performance. The study asserted in its conclusions that there is a positive and significant relationship between vigour type of engagement and organizational performance. They alluded this to the fact that highly engaged employees lead to increased innovation and productivity while at the same time helps in reducing costs for hiring new staff by retaining the old and talented ones. Consistently, a survey of employees from six public service organisations in India found out that high levels of employee engagement tend to support initiative taking and pursuance of organizational learning goals (Sonnentag's 2003).

Similarly, Wyatt (2007) surveyed 946 companies across 22 countries and found that highly engaged employees are more than twice as likely to be top performers than other employees who may not be engaged. According to the Chughtai and Buckley's (2009) article sought to investigate the mediating role of employee engagement on the relationship between trust in the principle and performance among 130 teachers in Pakistan. In this study employee engagement was measured by vigor, dedication and absorption. Besides mediating the relationship between teachers trust in the principal and performance, employee engagement through the construct of vigor was also found to have a significant influence on organizational performance. Koech and Cheboi (2018) conducted an empirical analysis of

employee engagement on employee performance in technical institutions in Kenya. The study revealed that employee engagement significantly and positively correlates with employee performance. This signifies that increased levels of employee engagement are associated with increased employee performance.

Consistently, Chege, Muathe and Maina's (2017) research study sought to establish the relationship between employee engagement, organisational commitment and performance of selected State Corporations in Kenya. The study asserted that the influence of employee engagement on organisational performance has been widely acknowledged and confirmed. Furthermore, the study found out that through vigor together with other constructs, employee engagement is significantly related to organizational performance. Researchers in social psychology have also been concerned with exploring how the attitudinal construct of employee engagement can be explained by individual performance outcomes.

Evidence has been accumulated on the basis of quantitative studies which suggest that high levels of engagement are associated with high levels of individual performance, and hence, organizational performance (Christian, Garza & Slaughter 2011; Hakanen & Schaufeli 2012; Soane 2013). Further, Vigor engagement consists of high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). Vigor engagement denotes a need of a person to perform particular activity because it gives inherent pleasure and satisfaction. Al-dalalmeh *et al.* (2018) sought to investigate the effect of employee engagement of those working in the IT department on organizational performance in the banking sector in Jordanian. The study established that employee engagement significantly affects organizational performance with

the highest contribution obtained by vigor engagement.

Similarly, Devi (2017) conducted a study to establish the impact of employee engagement on organizational performance in the selected private sector banks in India. The results obtained showed that Employee Engagement significantly affect Organizational Performance. A further inspection of the standardized weights revealed that the impact of vigor on organizational performance was the highest (0.82) followed by absorption on organizational performance (.80), and finally Dedication on organizational performance (0.72). Therefore, the result revealed that all the dimensions of Employee Engagement (Vigor, Dedication and Absorption) significantly affect Organizational performance.

Specifically, employees engaged in the vigour type of engagement have high levels of connectivity with their work tasks and that they are highly concerned with performance outcomes (Christian et al., 2011; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). This is made possible through recognition from colleagues in the form of high ratings on both in-role and extra-role performance (Bakker et al., 2004). Discretionary effort, which consists of an employee's willingness to go above minimal job responsibilities (Christian et al., 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Maslach et al., 2001; Rich et al., 2010;) enhanced increased performance (Christian et al., 2011).

Dedication Engagement

Dedication engagement is being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge (Al-dalahmeh et al., 2018). Dedication is all about the mental and emotional state that reflects a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, and pride on experience. A person cannot be labelled as dedicated without the presence of such factors. According to Mauno, Kinnunen, and Ruokolainen (2007), dedication engagement has conceptual similarities

with job involvement, defined as a strong psychological involvement or identification with one's work. Furthermore, dedication has been described as the individual's deriving sense of significance from work, feeling of enthusiasm and pride in the given job, as one feels inspired and challenged by the very job (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2009; Schaufeli et al., 2009). Employees who experience dedication are thus motivated to achieve organizational goals and reach targets which will improve the performance of the organization as a whole.

Previous studies that have looked at the relationship between employee engagement and performance outcomes have found different results for dedication type of engagement on such outcomes. Alarcon and Edwards (2011) sought to find out the influence of employee engagement on Job Satisfaction. The findings of the study indicated that, in spite of vigor having the most influence on job satisfaction in the study, previous studies had revealed that dedication influences job satisfaction more than vigor and absorption. Eghlidi and Karimi (2016) sought to establish the relationship between the components of employee engagement and organizational commitment among female employees working in the university. The results obtained showed that among the variables of interest in the regression the best predictor of organizational commitment was dedication to work. According to the results of stepwise regression analysis, the relationship between the components of employee engagement, dedication and organizational commitment was the most significant. Accordingly, several researches have suggested that there is a positive and significant relationship between employee commitment and organizational performance (e.g. Cheche, Muathe & Maina, 2017).

On the contrary, from Devi's (2017) research study which sought to establish the impact of employee engagement on organizational performance in selected private sector banks in India, the impact of

vigor on organizational performance was found to be the highest (0.82) followed by absorption on organizational performance (.80), and Dedication on organizational performance (0.72) was the last one. Nonetheless, this impact was still found to be significant at 95 per cent confidence level. Accordingly, Macey and Schneider, (2008) also found out that dedication engagement can be a very illusive force that can motivate an individual to achieve higher levels of organizational performance. A study of 50,000 employees found that the most engaged and committed perform 20 per cent better than their colleagues (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004). Moreover, dedication represents an interactive mode where employees gain challenge, inspiration, pride and the sense of meaning by engaging themselves within their work. Such an interactive mode of engagement, tends to contribute to employees' job satisfaction, suppresses intentions to quit and hence improved organizational performance (Koech & Cheboi, 2018).

According to Schaufeli and Bakker, (2010) Vigor and dedication are held as opposites of exhaustion and cynicism, which are the two core factors of burnout. Vigor and exhaustion are the ends of an energy continuum, whereas dedication and cynicism are the ends of an identification continuum. Most researchers agree that the concept of engagement contains these two dimensions and that they individually and collectively have a significant influence on organizational performance (e.g. Harter, Schmidt, Schimidz, Killham, Angawal & Plowman, 2013; Shirom, 2010; Demerouti, Mostert & Bakker, 2010; Bakker *et al.*, 2008). Consistent with such finding, Chege, Muathe and Maina (2017) sought to establish the relationship between employee engagement, organisational commitment and performance of selected State Corporations in Kenya. The study asserted that dedication and other two of employee engagement (vigor and absorption) have a

significant relationship with organizational performance either individually or collectively.

On the other hand, dedication engagement has been found to be closely related with vigor and absorption type of employee engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010), which may suggest that the findings of this study may be similar in all constructs of employee engagement. An alternative explanation can be searched from the truthfulness of the presumption of the present study according to which dedication is the prerequisite of vigor and absorption and thus the main component of work engagement. Because vigorous individuals tend to experience typically high levels of energy, vigor could be an outcome of dedication (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Hence, if vigor and absorption cannot be experienced without dedication, the prerequisites of dedication would be the fundamental prerequisites of employee engagement. Focusing all one's efforts on completing tasks at hand and not paying attention to anything going around as he or she gets to complete the work with minimum distraction and maximum effectiveness. As a result, employees who are absorbed in their work are generally better performers and contribute to the success of the organization. With regards to dedication engagement, this is all about being inspired, enthusiastic, and highly involved in one's job (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014).

Absorption Engagement

Based on in-depth interviews, absorption engagement was added as the third construct of employee engagement (Truss, Alfes, Delbridge, Shantz & Soane 2013; Bakker & Leiter (2010), even though it does not have a conceptual opposite in the dimensions of burnout. Bakker and Leiter (2010) have asserted that absorption may appear to be an outcome of vigor and dedication. In addition, dedication has been mentioned to have a positive influence on one's level of energy. Absorption engagement is the pleasant state of being immersed

in one's works, experiencing time passing by quickly and being unable to detach from one's job (Obeidat, 2016; Shantz *et al.*, 2013; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010).

Thus, an employee who is absorbed in his or her job is characterized by being fully concentrated in his or her job, does not feel time passing by while performing the job, and has difficulty detaching or removing his or her self from work (Shekari, 2015; Rayton & Yalabik, 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) and characterized by mentally being at work. Employees that experience absorption engagement get themselves engrossed in their work and find it difficult to detach themselves from the job (Shekari, 2015; Rayton & Yalabik, 2014).

A correlation has been found to exist between employee engagement and many performance outcomes such as customer loyalty, productivity and profitability, employee turnover, employee and customer safety incidences, absenteeism, shrinkage and defects across many organizations (Harter *et al.*, 2013). These outcomes were found to be very pronounced between the top performing and bottom performing organisations implying that the influence of employee engagement through its constructs which include absorption, on business success is significant. In an empirical analysis of employee engagement on the performance of Technical institutions in Kenya (Koech & Cheboi, 2018) it was established that through the constructs of absorption, dedication and vigor, there is a positive and significant relationship between employee engagement and the performance of organizations.

Consistently, Eghlidi and Karimi (2016) sought to establish the relationship between the components of employee engagement and organizational commitment among female employees working in the university. The results obtained showed that among the variables of interest in the regression the best predictor of organizational commitment was dedication to work while absorption to work came

third. However, the results of stepwise regression analysis, further indicated that the relationship between absorption engagement and organizational commitment was also significant. On the other hand, Devi (2017) also conducted a study which sought to establish the impact of employee engagement on organizational performance in selected private sector banks in India. The findings revealed that Employee Engagement is significantly affecting Organizational Performance. A further inspection of the standardized weights indicated that the impact of vigor on organizational performance was the highest (0.82) followed by absorption on organizational performance (.80), and finally Dedication on organizational performance (0.72).

Moderating Role of Supervisor Support

Supervisor support has been found to promote employee engagement through both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Halbeselben, 2010). This support tends to lead employees to feel more satisfied and get devoted to their work, which results in the willingness to dedicate their work effort to perform their job tasks to elevated heights and standards. According to Saks (2006), first line managers are believed to be very influential to employee engagement levels and hence increased organizational performance. However, such managers are also believed to be the root cause of disengagement among employees which also end up impacting negatively on the performance of the organization (Kataria, Rastogi & Garg, 2013). Accordingly, organizations that would wish to improve on their employees' engagement should focus on the employees' perceptions of the support that they receive from their supervisors. Significantly, immediate supervisors should provide employees with clarity of their work roles which can be recognized as having a direct effect on the engagement levels and hence organizational performance.

According to Kose's (2016) research study about the relationship between work engagement, perceived organizational support and organizational climate, it was established that the highest positive and significant relationship was between perceived support and employee engagement. Thus, the perception of organizational support is the extent of belief of workers that their organization appreciates their contributions and that it cares about their well-being (Robbins & Judge, 2012) and so is the supervisor. Mukanzi, Gachunga, Ngungi, & Kihoro (2014) asserted that perceived supervisor support can help mitigate the adverse effects that could lead to employees' intention to leave. They further posited that this support could expand the pool of resources available, as well as reinforce other limited resources such as emotional resources.

Dependent Variable

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance is one of the most important variables in the management research and arguably the most important indicator of the performance of any organization. This has been supported by some of the organizational theories who have espoused on the idea that an organization can still achieve its performance objectives irrespective of the constraints imposed by the limited resources (Lusthaus & Adrien, 1998). In this context, profit and revenue collections must become one of the many indicators of performance. Therefore, Lebas and Euske (2006) provided a set of definitions to illustrate the concept of organizational performance. For instance, he defined performance as one that constitutes both financial and non-financial indicators which offer information on the degree of achievement of objectives and results. A meta-analysis of 7,939 business units in 36 companies found a relationship between employee engagement, customer satisfaction, productivity, profit and employee turnover (Harter *et al.*, 2002; Harter, 2000). They concluded that increasing employee

engagement and building an environment to support this can significantly increase the likelihood of business success.

Previous studies have found mixed results on the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance (e.g. Koech & Cheboi, 2018; Al-dalahmeh *et al.*, 2018; Cheche *et al.*, 2017; Devi, 2017; Kazimoto, 2016; Kim *et al.*, 2012; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). In a study to analyse the effect of employee engagement factors on organizational performance of selected business retail enterprises in Wobulenzi city of Uganda (Kazimoto, 2016), it was established that employee engagement had a positive and significant effect on the non-financial performance of the organizations. Consistent with such findings, Devi (2017) also sought to have a deep analysis of the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance. The study used 150 respondents from the private sector banks in India who were obtained by the convenient sampling technique. The study revealed that a positive and significant relationship exists between employee engagement and organizational performance. Similarly, employee engagement has been found to have an impact on critical business success factors such as customer satisfaction, employee turnover, employee commitments and other related constructs which in turn affects organisational performance (Right Management, 2009). Most employers also believe that engaged employees are willing to do more, have higher productivity and positive work relationships (Psychometric Canada, 2011).

In addition, Al-dalahmeh *et al.* (2018) sought to investigate the effect of IT employees' engagement on organizational performance through the mediating role of job satisfaction for IT employees within the IT Departments in Jordanian banking sector. The results also showed that IT employee engagement significantly affected organizational performance and three of its dimensions; vigor, absorption, and

dedication contributed significantly to organizational performance. Cheche *et al.* (2017) corroborated this results in a study that sought to investigate the mediating influence of organizational commitment on the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance of selected state corporations in Kenya. Partly, the results indicated a direct and significant relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance, rejecting the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the two variables. Similarly, Koech and Cheboi, (2018); Dajani (2015); Markos and Sridevi (2010) also found a positive relationship between the employee engagement and organisational performance.

However, in spite of these findings, Balain and Sparrow (2009) suggested that the evidence of an engagement-organisational performance link is not particularly robust and that a number of research studies have found a reverse causation between performance and attitudes, i.e. that it is the organisation's performance that is causing positive attitudes amongst employees and not necessarily the other way round. Other studies have suggested a series of mediating factors between attitudes and performance (e.g. Cheche et al., 2017; Schneider *et al.*, 2002), which makes causal links more difficult to determine. By adapting financial performance to measure organizational performance, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2009) conducted a study to investigate how daily variations in job and personal resources are related to work engagement and financial performance among 42 employees in Greek Fast Food Company. The results of the study found that day-level work engagement partially mediated the relationship between day-level coaching and daily financial performance. In their study, work engagement was characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Consistently, Obeidat (2016) explored the relationship between corporate social responsibility, employee engagement and

organizational performance. Results of the study revealed that corporate social responsibility (both internal and external) and employee engagement (vigor, absorption, and dedication) have a significant positive relationship with organizational performance.

Critique of Literature Reviewed

According to Odhong' *et al.*'s (2014) study on the effect of human capital drivers on the performance of the investment and mortgages bank limited in Kenya. The study mentioned employee engagement as one of the drivers and sought to identify its effect on organizational performance. The rest of the drivers included; leadership practices, workforce optimization, knowledge accessibility, and learning capacity. The results revealed a negative and significant effect of employee engagement on organizational performance. However, an objectively conducted research should not seek to identify a cause effect relationship between two variables but rather involves the use of a non-biased term in framing of its objectives. Similarly, the study decided to correlate the predictor variables as the predicted variable against each other, negating the importance of using organizational performance as the predicted variable.

Another study was carried out to establish the relationship between job characteristics and employee engagement among state corporations in Kenya (Mugo, Wario & Odhiambo, 2014). The study recommended that organizations in Kenya may need to invest more in employee engagement in order to realize enhanced organizational performance. With a sample of 197 state corporations out of 432, the study applied an exploratory research design. However, based on the nature of research, a survey research study would be most appropriate.

Accordingly, Farndale and Murre (2015) explored the moderating effect of country on the relationship between job resources and employee engagement.

He employed questionnaire responses from 19260 employees of a multinational financial service corporation in Mexico, the Netherlands and the USA. Although there has been considerable empirical investigation into the relationship between job resources and engagement, the study showed that little has focussed on different national settings simultaneously.

In a mixed method study approach to explore the role played by specific HR practices in the implementation of environmental initiatives such as employee attitudes to the organization (Benn, Teo & Martin, 2015) it was found that participation in environmental initiatives was directly associated with higher levels of employee engagement. The study only applied 16 semi structured interview schedules on a survey of 675 employees across two organizations. However, the findings were based on a cross sectional study which may not have a great impact in future. Thus, it is suggested that a longitudinal study would be most appropriate for long term applicability.

CONCLUSION

Employee engagement is a work-related state of mind. This can be characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption. Engagement is also strongly

influenced by organizational characteristics such as integrity, communication and culture of innovation. The employee emotional commitment to the job and company is key factor for engagement. The degree of engagement determines people's productivity and their willingness to stay with the organization. Many research studies highlight that employee relationship with organizational strategy and goals, acknowledgement for doing good work and culture of learning and development, promote high level of engagement. The cost of higher employee engagement will result in greater organizational effectiveness. Employee engagement drives effectiveness in an organization by improving retention, customer loyalty, productivity, safety and ultimately, profitability. Engaged employees care about their organization and work to contribute towards its success. They are likely to work better, faster and more safely. Such employees are less likely to leave for another job, or take unauthorized leave. Importantly, they are also more focused on the customer experience, ensuring that customers are happy and profits are maximized. In today's world of economic uncertainty, engaging employees is critical to ensuring an organizational longevity and profitability.

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