



**INFLUENCE OF RECOGNITION PRACTICE ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT LAKE VICTORIA SOUTH
WATER SERVICES BOARD IN KISUMU, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Employee performance is critical in organizations hence need to become more and more concerned about how to increase productivity through effective employee performance. There must be an equitable balance between the employee's contribution in terms of employee performance to the organization and the organization's contribution to the employees in terms of reward for effective performance. This study therefore sought to analyze the influence of non-monetary reward on employee performance at the Lake Victoria South Water Service Board (LVSWSB) in Kisumu. Specifically, the study sought to examine the influence of recognition on employee performance in LVSWSB. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Sampling technique applied was census since the population was manageable. The instrument of data collection was the questionnaire. The statistics for descriptive and inferential analysis done resulted from use of the computer software (SPSS version 24). Chi-square test statistics revealed that Recognition has an influence on employee performance. In conclusion, recognition has direct impact on employee performance. The study recommended that management of LVSWSB should encourage, recognize and reinforce achievements and outstanding performance from the members of staff. The study as well recommended for further research on the variables using other methods and different organizations.

Key words: Recognition, Performance

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INTRODUCTION

In the current competitive environment, employees remain to be the overall useful resource to organizations. As a result, organizational structures are heavily dependent on employees who influence organizational mobility through their engagement, attitudes and motivation (Bruzelius & Skarvad, 2004). According to Bhattecharya and Mukherjee (2009), the future of organizations is in the hand of employees whose contributions should be optimized. Whiteley (2002) hints that employees are more concerned with motivation to some extent and that one thing they have in common is that higher work motivation increase performance.

To get employees to outperform during all conditions is one of the most difficult challenges managers are facing (Nohria, Groysberg & Lee, 2008). Bruzelius and Skarvad (2004) argue that to get employees motivated to work more efficiently and to support organizational values and goals, they need a rewarding arrangement beyond salaries and wages. This arrangement should encourage skilled employees to stay within the organization as well as increase job satisfaction and commitment to the organization and thereafter increase performance (Whiteley, 2002). The environments within which organizations operate all over the world face several challenges due to the dynamic nature of the environment.

The focus of every organization is growth and productivity and one of the many challenges businesses face is to satisfy the employees' in order to survive with the ever changing and evolving environment. The importance of an appropriate reward practice is seen to be the key factor in motivating employee's performance hence organizations productivity depends on an individual or group performance. Reward practices improve performance by addressing issues such as learning and development which is

basically the ability to perform a given task, reward management which is the motivation factor and Job design and employee involvement which is the opportunity given to employees to participate in decision making. Organizations adapt different ways to motivate their employees. Some use combination of intrinsic and extrinsic reward practices. According to Mahaney and Lederer (2006), organizations offer intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to employees for purposes of improving human resources outcome or results. They continue to say that employees will have pride in their work when they feel motivated and believe their efforts are important to the success of the organization and their duties are challenging and rewarding.

Wiscombe (2002) argued that recognition and praise are among the strong motivators. The reason for this argument is that all people like being appreciated in one way or another for their contribution at work. She further continues to say that non-cash incentives can contribute a lot to raising morale, increasing productivity, improving quality and customer service of employees and it is cost effective to the organization.

Bob Nelson (2001) says that there is a strong link between non-cash incentives and improved job motivation. He thinks that non-cash incentives lower stress, absenteeism, and turnover and raise morale, productivity, competitiveness, revenue and profit. According to Sarah Gale (2002), non-monetary incentives are seen as more valuable incentives than monetary incentives. In her article, she emphasizes that when employees are paid for performing well in their work, then it becomes part of their salary expectations.

Dean R. Spitzer (1998) compares cash incentives with non-monetary incentives, and notes that the correlation between the monetary value of rewards and motivation is not very high and that

employees who perform best in their respective jobs are not necessarily the highest-paid employees. In as much as money is a good incentive for employees, it may in the long run be disadvantageous for the organization. The reason for this argument is that employees may become accustomed to the monetary incentive or reward and start to them money as an entitlement hence an employee may sacrifice quality to take the shortest and fastest way to maximize their monetary gain.

Scott Jeffrey (2002) states tangible non-monetary incentives might be perceived as gifts that change the nature of the employment relationship. The giving of gifts or a trip to a touristic place may produce more sincere relationships that may be remembered longer and more clearly, create a positive feeling in employees than what is done with a cash bonus and this automatically increases the commitment of workers towards the organization. Wiscombe (2002) says that non-monetary incentive is the only way an organization can maintain and improve employee morale while retaining costs.

Statement of the Problem

Employees not only want good extrinsic compensation on the work but also want to be praised and valued for the efforts they put in on the work (Saunderson, 2004). According to a study by Gostick and Elton (2007), organizations that have the motivational systems comprising employee recognition and appreciation are associated with higher employee morale and performance levels. According to Nyakundi, Kabare and Munene (2012), through a study at Kenyatta National Hospital, the Kenya public sector is bedeviled with poor performance due to job dissatisfaction resulting from poor intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Another study by Muchai and Mwangi (2012) on the effect of employee rewards and recognition on job performance at Nakuru Water and Sanitation Services Company showed that recognized

employees are more involved in organization's issues and perform better. However, the company had inadequate options in recognizing and rewarding their best performers. A case study by Njanja, Maina, Kibet and Njagi (2013) of Kenya Power and Lighting Company found out that when employees are recognized and rewarded, they become motivated to perform even better. They recommended that rewards have a positive effect on employee performance though no reward system is perfect because motivation is personal. Other than these studies, first there is scanty knowledge on the specific effects of non-monetary awards, promotions, training and job enrichment on job performance in the context of the public water sector. The Kenya public Sector and LVSWBS notwithstanding, lack the important component of recognition hence lack of balance between employee motivation and job performance. This raised the taking up of the study on influence of recognition on employee performance at LVSWBS.

Research Objective

The research determined the influence of recognition on employee performance at LVSWBS. The study was guided by the following research hypothesis;

- **H₀** Recognition has no significant effect on Employee Performance of LVSWBS

LITERATURE REVIEW

Maslow Need Hierarchy Theory

According to Maslow theory there are two types of needs that emerge as a hierarchy. Lower level and higher-level needs. Lower level needs can be satisfied externally (extrinsically) and higher level can be satisfied internally (intrinsically). Lower level needs are the basic biological human needs such as food, shelter, sex and dress while upper level needs are those which individual strives to achieve after the satisfaction of the lower level such as self-esteem and self-actualization. When lower level needs are satisfied in the hierarchy,

individual strive for the next level (Zeb et al., 2010). Walker, Churchill and Ford (2009) pointed out that intrinsic rewards are intangible such as recognition, appreciation and praise. Whereas, extrinsic rewards are external and tangible and reflect lower-order human needs such as food, shelter sex and dress.

Broad (2007) argued that incentives, reward and recognition are the basic factors leading to high-level employee performances. Reward and recognition develop an enthusiasm among employees, increase their desire for work and also establish a linkage between performance and motivation of the employees. Both extrinsic and intrinsic reward enhances employee's performance and it will lead to higher job satisfaction. At organizational levels, employees are extrinsically motivated by providing them with higher pay and promotions. Recognizing the contributions of the workers will add to the strengthening of their self-esteem. The Maslow Theory is relevant to this study because Maslow highlighted issues related to human satisfaction and that a human being cannot only be satisfied by one thing rather many things according to levels of satisfaction. When employees are advocating for recognition and reward, it means the basic wants are already fulfilled hence need for higher level needs until such a time a person attains self actualization.

Hertzberg Two Factor Theory

Hertzberg (1959), cited by Zeb et al. (2010), explored work motives by offering the Two-Factor Theory, he divided the factors of motivating employee performance in two categories such as satisfiers or (motivators) and dissatisfies or (hygiene). According to the theory, satisfiers or motivators are intrinsic motivational factors which are related to job itself and internal to individual such as recognition, development and responsibility. Dissatisfaction or hygiene factors are extrinsic variables, which remove dissatisfaction such as salary, working condition

and relationship with colleagues. The Herzberg theory constitutes the same framework in support of the argument of recognition effects on employee's job satisfaction (Zeb et al, 2010).

According to Armstrong and Brown (2006) satisfiers or motivators are responsible for motivating the individuals to better performance. Robbins (1993) further explains that job satisfaction is consistently contingent upon certain factors such as achievement, recognition, responsibility and advancement that is related to intrinsic motivation. Dissatisfied employees attribute their work dissatisfaction to extrinsic factors such as company policy, salary, working condition, administration and supervision. LaMotta (1995) says that organizations cannot motivate their employees unless they remove their dissatisfies. He further argues that hygiene factors such as salary, supervision and working environment do not motivate employees towards a certain behaviour when these factors are met. Net et al (2001) elaborates that dissatisfied employees cannot be motivated unless and until the employee gets reward and recognition. The relevance of Hertzberg Theory to this study is that it emphasizes on the motivators, which are key to job satisfaction. At LVSWSB, the problem is lack of motivation that is achievable through employee recognition and reward practices that Hertzberg call satisfiers.

Aldefer's ERG Model

Alderfer (1972), modified Maslow's theory and divided the need hierarchy into three basic levels such as Existence needs (incentives and physical requirements such as pay, security and working conditions.), Relatedness needs (need for social relations such as relationships with family, friends and colleagues) and Growth needs (self-fulfilment, the desire for career growth development and competency). According to this model all, the basic needs motivate behaviour at the same time and might not emerge like Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory. It means that

any need emerges any time to motivate employees regardless of the fulfilment of the other need. It can be argued that the three levels of needs in the ERG model represent recognition. Existence needs such as pay and incentives corresponds with reward, and relatedness needs like social relations correspond with recognition.

According to Armstrong and Brown (2006), this theory is concerned with the material satisfaction and maintaining balance that people want to have regarding certain substances. Schultz (1982) explains that organizations can satisfy these needs through salary, fringe benefits, safe working environment and job security. It relates to tangible goals such as food, pay, home and so on. In another place Muchinsky (1987) says that relatedness needs human beings cannot live alone and are not self-contained. Therefore, relationship is necessary between human beings for the satisfaction of certain needs. This is further supported by Armstrong (1991) by adding that the needs of belongingness and acknowledgement are met by acceptance, confirmation, understanding and influence among human beings. Schultz (1982) supports this contention that employers can meet this need in the workplace by providing necessary support, respect and recognition. The relatedness of Adelfer's theory to this study is that the theory synchronises the three basic levels to mean that employees need all the basic levels to feel recognized and satisfied.

Expectancy Theory

The theory was developed by Victor Vroom (1964), who tried to lay emphasis on how employees make choices from the possible options available leading to their resultant behaviour and effort. The theory is solidly

founded on two variables namely, the valence, which is seen as the perceived value of the outcomes, and the expectancy on the other part which is viewed as the probability that the behaviour through action and effort will lead towards the desired outcomes. On the basis of this theory, anticipation about the consequences, outcomes, or results influence both short-term and long-term behaviour indicators in an individual. Thus the employees assess the worthiness of doing a particular task before devoting their energy and time (Torrington *et al*, 2008).

Claydon and Beardwell (2007) argue that the expectancy theory enables the individual to exert effort and skill on a task based on the possible options available. Both valence and expectancy are therefore understood to influence employees' job performance. The theory is also based on two assumptions namely; employees are motivated to receive positive outcomes while avoiding negative outcomes and that the employees are rational, careful processors of information (Lawler, 2003). Further, Claydon and Beardwell (2007) note that individuals choose work behaviour they believe will most likely result in the realization of specific outcomes that they highly value. According to Pouliskas (2009), the significance of the expectancy theory is majorly to empower the individual employees based on the higher value attached to a set of recognitions and the probability of their recurrence, employee relations, commitment and participation. The theory is relevant to this study in the sense that it forms the basis of relating employee recognition to job performance through satisfaction of individual positive expectations.

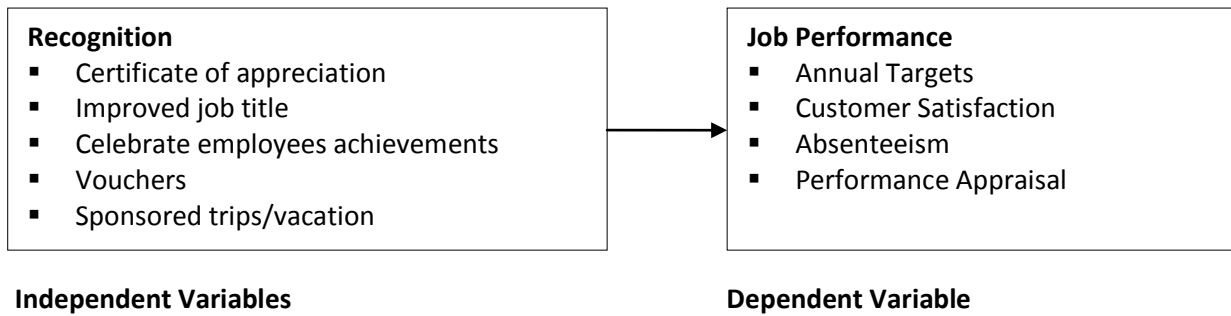


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Author

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive design. The target population for this study was all the 52 employees stationed at the LVSWSB head office in Kisumu. The employees were into four departments, which included Finance, Corporate Planning, Technical Services and Human Resource and Administration. This study adopted non-probabilistic sampling technique known as convenience sampling to choose respondents to participate in the research. Primary data from non-management participants was collected by use of semi-structured and self-administered questionnaire. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The following regression equation was set to be tested.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + E$$

Recognition

Where: -

Y = Employee performance (Dependent variable)

β_0 = Constant

β_1 = Coefficient

E=Unexplained variation i.e. error term, it represents all factors that affect the dependent variable but are not included in the model either because they are not known or difficult to measure.

X_1 = Recognition

β_1 = Regression Co-efficient; Define the amount by which Y is changed for every unit change of predictor variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research study targeted all employees of Lake Victoria South Water Services Board. Questionnaires were distributed to all the employees, and all the 52 employees responded to the questionnaire.

Table 1: Type of Non-Monetary Reward that respondents received at LVSWSB in (%)

Reason	SA	A	M	D	SD	Total
Treat to foreign or local trips	2	12	10	40	37	100
Given a shopping voucher	12	8	8	46	27	100
Contract extension	8	10	23	44	15	100
Time off	0	31	6	10	53	100
Certificate of appreciation	4	4	6	41	45	100

Table 1 showed that majority of the respondents interviewed disagreed that they had been given shopping voucher as non-monetary reward at

LVSWSB with less than half of the respondents agreeing that they had been treated to a foreign or local trip, others having their contract

extended, being given time-off or receiving certificate of appreciation. According to Jeffery (2002), the non-monetary incentives are highly visible and have greater value as a trophy and brings a higher utility level. It provides a strong sense of security and stability of employment for employees.

Inferential Statistical Test for Influence on Job Performance

Chi-square test between Recognition and Job performance

The Chi-square test results in the table 2, revealed a positive statistical significance

association between employees recognition indicators and their job performance indicators; ($\chi^2(DF (1-4) = 86.846, p < .001)$). This meant that recognition indicators have positive influence on the job performance by LVSWSB employees, and that such influence is not by chance. Statistically it means, recognition of employees do influence employees job performance and that it help increase or boost employees efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of the daily duties at work. This result logically, confirmed findings by, Kahn, Zarif and Khan (2011) who conducted a study on effects of recognition-based rewards on employees' efficiency and effectiveness at Al-Karam Towel Industries in Karachi, Pakistan.

Table 2: Chi-square test results between Job performance and Recognition

	Job Performance	Recognition
Chi-Square		86.846 ^a
df		4
Asymp. Sig.		.000

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognition is associated with improved job performance outcome. Even though 15% (8) have received recognition award for their performance at LVSWSB, a significant proportion of those who were recognized shows level of satisfaction on their job performance. Further, chi-square test revealed statistically significant relationship between recognition of employees and job performance; meaning recognition of employees positively influences their efficiency and effectiveness at work. This can also be evidence when one of the respondent linking his/her reward on quality of work done. Nolan (2012) found out that when an organization recognizes employees for their good performance, it plays a key role in enhancing the relationships that is vital and meant to improve performance in the organization. Being that recognition is a very important factor for high job performance, it is a mechanism that addresses the feelings and emotions of employees since not all employees are satisfied with attractive basic pay and

allowances. Allen, R. and Kilmann, R. (2001) also stated in their study that non-monetary employee rewards often invoke feelings of accomplishment or self-worth from employees who have done a quality job.

The study also showed that the respondents were being recognized on their job performance through non-monetary incentives by being given shopping voucher. Jeffery (2002), in his study, investigated non-monetary incentives and their ability to control the various psychological needs and that's why non-monetary incentives have a deeper and long-term effect than monetary incentives on motivation. The study went further to explain that Non-monetary incentives are highly visible and have greater value as a trophy.

There is a relationship that exist between attitude and behavior in human beings and that the attitude aspect has an impact on the behavior of an individual. Employees have various expectations hence it is the sole responsibility of the Human resource

practitioners to understand and find ways of aligning them with the expectations of the organization. The alignment of employee expectations and organization expectations leads to high performance. The first objective of this study was to determine the influence of recognition on job performance at LVSWSB. The study showed generally a positive relationship between recognition and job performance. The study found that recognition brings about motivation and has nothing to do with seniority but has a positive impact on employees.

Staffs should be recognized at workplace to enhance employee performance, enhance promotional practice at workplace to increase job satisfaction among staffs, good training policy at workplace should be established to improve capacity of staffs and increase employee performance at workplace, Job enrichment should be encouraged as good practice within the

organization to improve and enhance performance of workers.

Suggestion for further research

This study was conducted from a single Water institution that covers a few counties in Kenya. Various institutions have cultures, values and practices that are different therefore the findings of this study cannot represent the entire water sector in Kenya as non-monetary reward is concerned. In addition, the research was mainly quantitative hence; it failed to obtain the in-depth, comprehensive and rich qualitative data that interviews provide. For these reasons therefore, future researchers should collect data from multiple cases and use both interviews and questionnaires. This will increase the reliability and credibility of the study findings. Since there are many other non-monetary rewards, future researchers should also consider adding them in their variables.

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