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**MEDIATION EFFECT OF WORK ENGAGEMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL
LEARNING AND EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN KENYAN CONTEXT**

Njoroge, P, T., Bula, H. & Wanyoike, R.

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^{1*}Njoroge, P, T., ²Bula, H., & ³Wanyoike, R.

^{1*}PhD Candidate, School of Business, Kenyatta University [KU], Nairobi, Kenya

²PhD, Senior Lecturer, School of Business, Kenyatta University [KU], Nairobi, Kenya

³PhD, Lecturer, School of Business, Kenyatta University [KU], Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the mediating effect of work engagement on the relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance in the context of hospitality firms in Kenya. Descriptive and explanatory research designs were adopted for determining the relationships between variables and establishing models of these relationships. Using stratified random sampling, a sample of 225 participants drawn from classified hospitality firms in Kenya was selected. A cross-sectional design was adopted for data collection using a semi-structured questionnaire. Data was analyzed and interpreted using descriptive and inferential statistics. Multiple regression and correlation analyses were used to measure causal relationship between and among study constructs and test hypotheses. The findings of this study provide evidence that work engagement has positive correlational relationship with organizational learning and employees' performance and has partial mediation effect on the relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance. The study established that work engagement is connected to employees' motivation, morale and job satisfaction. Therefore, firms should manage effectively job level elements such as decision making, scope of responsibility and autonomy in order to create a climate for engaged workers.

Keywords: *Employees' Performance, Organizational Learning, Work Engagement*

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INTRODUCTION

Work engagement has been acknowledged in literature as critical to employee's behavioural outcomes that are consistent with organizational social and psychological contexts (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011). It is argued that work engagement entails motivational effect that lead to higher levels of job performance (Newman & Harrison, 2008). Engagement theory proposes that the psychological experience that drive work related behaviour are influenced by individual and organizational factors (Kahn (1990) which leads to the description of work engagement as personal investment of individual physical, emotional and cognitive resources to role performance (Christian, *et al.*, 2011). Rich, LePine, and Crawford (2010) posit that physical resources relate to energy and vigour, emotional resources relates to dedication and attachment, and cognitive resources relate to job focus and absorption.

Empirical literature reveals a consistent effort to ascertain the antecedents and effects of work engagement in the organization. Studies have been conducted to assess the linkage between organizational learning and work engagement. For instance, Lin and Lee (2017) established that work engagement had mediating influence on the link between organizational learning and employee's innovative behaviour. Malik (2017) examined the influence of organizational learning on work engagement in IT firms in India and found that organizational learning impacted employee's vigour, dedication and absorption in the roles. Hussain and Ishak (2017) established that organizational learning positively influenced and correlated with employee engagement. However, although there was a consensus on the effect of organizational learning on work engagement, the construct of work engagement was operationalized using different measures. For instance, Lin and Lee (2017) and Malik (2017) indicators of work engagement were vigour, absorption and dedication, while Hussain and Ishak (2017) considered energy, involvement and efficacy as indicators of engagement. This calls for a further

examination on the model of measuring work engagement.

Past studies have sought to determine the effect of work engagement on employees' performance and the mediating influence of work engagement with differing results. Park, Song, Yoon and Kim (2014) found that work engagement had full mediation effect on the relationship between learning and employee's behaviours and Rich, *et al.* (2010) aver that engagement influence job performance dimensions of task performance and organizational citizenship behavior. Christian, *et al.* (2011) established that work engagement was positively correlated with task and contextual performance. Similarly, Anitha (2014) indicated that engagement had a positive influence on employee's performance and had a mediation role between its antecedents and effects. Anwar and Niode (2017) established that work engagement influenced knowledge sharing, procedural justice and employee's innovative behaviour. It is evident from these empirical studies that work engagement is associated with employees' behavioural outcomes. However, there is need to establish the mediating effect of work engagement on the link between organizational learning employees' performance.

The contextual and contingent nature of work engagement (Anitha 2014), organizational learning (Argote, 2011) and employees' performance (Dhammika, 2013) limit generalization of findings from different economies and industries. Most empirical studies on work engagement and organizational learning are concentrated in Western contexts with scarce studies in developing countries. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the mediating effect of work engagement on the relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance in the context of hospitality firms in Kenya.

Research Hypotheses

The proposed research hypotheses were:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance in classified hospitality firms in Kenya

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between organizational learning and work engagement in classified hospitality firms in Kenya

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between work engagement and employees' performance in classified hospitality firms in Kenya

H₀₄: Work engagement has no mediation effect on the relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance in classified hospitality firms in Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work Engagement

The engagement theory proposes that work engagement entails the simultaneous employment of individual's physical, emotional and cognitive resources in assigned role (Kahn, 1990). This engagement is reflected in individual workers investment of energy and vigour, dedication and attachment and focus and absorption in their work. However, this involvement should be simultaneous rather than fragmented (Kahn, 1992). This conceptualization suggests a linkage between engagement and job performance (Rich, *et al*, 2010).

It is argued that work engagement influence employee's performance because the more an individuals is puts more energy, is focused and dedicated the more and better the outcomes of their labour (Anwar & Niode, 2017). Employees who are absorbed and dedicated exhibit more enthusiasm, are more alert and attentive, and enjoy their work which leads to enhanced performance. Work engagement provides a mechanism that explains the relationship between individual characteristics and organizational factors related to job performance and behaviour. Empirical studies draw a mediation influence between work

engagement and organizational and employee's performance (Christian, *et al*. 2011)

The measures of work engagement as espoused and advanced in past studies Macey and Schneider (2008), Rich *et al*. (2010) and Christian, *et al*. (2011) were adapted for this study. This choice is informed by the framework's specification of engagement as a mediator among its antecedents such as learning and outcomes such as job performance. Therefore, the indicators of work engagement for this study were willingness to dedicate physical, emotional and cognitive resources to the job (task and contextual) performance. The physical construct entailed energy, resilience and vigour, emotional involved the attachment or dedication to one's work performance, and cognitive involved job focus, absorption and vigilance.

Organizational Learning

The concept of organizational learning has received varied descriptions and definitions over the years. Some scholars describe organizational learning as changes linked to environmental adaptation and realignment (March, 1991), adaptation and transformation resulting from environmental changes (Argyris, 1992), blending of ideas and knowledge (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990), knowledge acquisition and utilization (Huber, 1991), exploration and exploitation of knowledge resources (March, 1991), acquisition, sharing and utilization of knowledge (Senge, 1990), change process in individuals, group and organization in terms of shared and applied knowledge (Vera & Crossan, 2003), process of change in cognition and behaviour of individuals in the organization (Bandura, 2005).

Scholars have adopted varied theoretical approaches to the study of organization learning. The model advanced by Crossan, *et al*. (1999) comprises knowledge intuition, interpretation and integration. Argote (2011) view organizational learning in terms of knowledge creation, knowledge retention, knowledge transfer and institutionalizing. Other scholars have used commitment to learning, communication, open mind, knowledge sharing,

shared vision, connection with the environment, leader support and reward system as indicators of organizational learning (Easterby-smith & Lyles, 2011). Gomez (2005) construction of organizational learning comprised managerial commitment, systems perspective, openness, experimentation, knowledge transfer and integration as indicators while Chiva, *et al.* (2007) components constituted experimentation, risk taking, external environment interaction, dialogue, and participative decision making. In this study, Huber's (1991) model of organizational learning comprising knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation and organizational memory was adapted.

Employees' Performance

Employee's performance can be broadly described as an employee's output from job and non-job related activities reflected in task execution, job proficiency, team work and citizenship behaviour demonstrated in the commitment to realization of organizational objectives (Campbell, 1990). The scientific management perspective view of employee's performance was largely concerned with quantity output of the worker. With advent of human relations school of thought, the view of employee performance was enhanced to include both quantity and quality dimensions. Therefore, employee performance was viewed in terms of efficiency (rate of output), efficacy (goal accomplishment) and quality (standards of performance) (Dhammika, 2013).

Extant literature reveals that employee performance has been measured at various standpoints and using different measures. Measurement of individual employee's performance remains contentious and of great concern both empirically and in practice in face of evolving organization and business dynamics (Luo, Shi, Li, & Miao, 2008). Constructs such as turnover intentions, commitment, motivation, engagement and job satisfaction have been included in the wider concept of employee's performance. Some studies have adopted a unidimensional view of employee

performance by focusing exclusively on job performance while others have adopted a multi-dimensional approach that incorporates job-specific aspects and non-job specific aspects of performance. This state of literature brings empirical vagueness and compounds the challenge of conceptualizing employees' performance (Luo, Shi, Li, & Miao, 2008).

The task and contextual model by Borman and Motowidlo (1993) view task performance to comprise behaviours linked to the job processes while contextual performance relates to the behavior linked to social, cultural and psychological contexts of the organization. The dimensions of task performance primarily refers to employee's proficiency, communication, discipline, team work, and leadership while the contextual performance dimensions comprise voluntary activities, cooperating with colleagues, assisting team mates, following rules and regulations and participating in corporate activities (Dhammika, 2013). In this study, employee's performance was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct whose indicators included service delivery, efficiency, teamwork, citizenship behavior.

Organizational Learning and Work Engagement

Lin and Lee (2017) examined the mediation role of work engagement on organizational learning and employee innovative behaviour in Taiwan. Organizational learning indicators were commitment to learning, shared vision, open mind and knowledge sharing. Work engagement measures were vigour, absorption and dedication. The study used paired samples of executives and subordinates, 54 managers and 511 employees, from 21 high-tech firms in Southern Taiwan. The study used hierarchical linear modelling to evaluate the research model. The construct validity of scales of measure of study variables was tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The results showed that work engagement had mediating influence on the link between organizational learning and employee's innovative behaviour.

Further, organizational learning process impacted employee's vigour, dedication and absorption.

Malik (2017) examined the influence of organizational learning on work engagement in IT firms in India. The variables used for learning include continuous learning, inquiry and dialogue while for work engagement included vigour, dedication and absorption. A sample of 250 managerial level employees' was selected. The measurement scale of learning and work engagement was analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis. Research hypotheses were tested using hierarchical multiple regression. The results revealed that organizational learning impacted employee's vigour, dedication and absorption in the roles.

Hussain and Ishak (2017) conducted a study on organizational learning and employee engagement. Dimensions of training mentoring and coaching were used as indicators of organizational learning while energy, involvement and efficacy were considered as measures of employee engagement. A survey of 100 respondents from commercial banks in Malaysia was conducted. Measures of organizational learning and work engagement were tested using confirmatory factor analysis. Pearson correlation was used to determine the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the variables. The findings revealed that organizational learning positively influenced and correlated with employee engagement.

A study by Park, Song, Yoon and Kim (2014) investigated the mediating influence of work engagement on learning organization and employee's innovative behavior. The study adopted survey method for data collection using a semi-structured questionnaire. Research model was tested using structural equation modelling and data analyzed using hierarchical multiple regressions. The findings of the study indicated that work engagement had full mediation effect on the relationship between learning and employee's behaviours and there was positive correlation between the two variables.

Work Engagement and Employees' Performance

Empirical evidence validates the positive influence of work engagement on performance outcomes at both organizational and employee level. Rich, *et al.* (2010) investigated the antecedents and effects of job engagement on job engagement. The study sampled 245 respondents in USA and analyzed data using inferential statistics, correlation analysis, structural modeling and factor analysis. The results indicated that engagement influence job performance dimensions of task performance and organizational citizenship behavior. In addition, the findings revealed that an engaged employee exhibit improved performance outcomes since they performed tasks with more enthusiasm, vigour, dedication and focus.

Christian, *et al.* (2011) sought to examine work engagement and its relationship with task and contextual elements of employee performance. The study adopted meta-analytic path modelling to determine the relationship between the variables. The study established that work engagement was positively correlated with task and contextual performance. This linkage is ascertained by engaged workers propensity to be persistent, intense, vigilant and focused in task performance while simultaneously investing energy and behaving in sync with the organizational values and goals. The study, further, revealed that engaged employee are cognitively alert, attentive and focused in their behaviour and are emotionally connected to their overall job performance.

A study by Anitha (2014) sought to establish the factors affecting employee engagement and employee performance. The study adopted causal study method in which a sample of 700 middle and lower managers from SMEs in India was selected using simple random sampling. Data was analyzed using regression and structural equation modelling. The results indicated that engagement had a positive influence on employee's performance and had a mediation role between its antecedents and effects. The study, further, drew association between work engagement and employee's job

satisfaction and citizenship behaviour, intentions to quit, burnout level and employee performance. Ajayi, *et al.*, 2017 examined the relationship between the organizational context and employee engagement in Nigeria. Using Cross sectional design, a sample of 200 SMEs was selected for the study. The findings show that employee engagement increases their performance and consequently enhances organizational potential for growth and survival.

Banihani and Syed (2017) conducted a study on gendered work engagement in telecommunication companies in Jordan. The study sampled thirty six employees from three firms. As an entirely qualitative research, the study used content analysis. The study revealed that contextual aspects

of work environment influenced performance. Work engagement is associated with motivational influence on employee's performance as it creates a climate of trust, enthusiasm and warmth. Further, the results showed that work engagement characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption which has positive effects on employee's performance. Kim and Park (2017) investigated the relationships between work engagement and employee's behavior. A sample of 400 employees from public-sector organizations in Korea were surveyed. Data was analyzed using structural equation modeling. The findings showed that work engagement impacted employee's performance. In addition work engagement influenced knowledge sharing, procedural justice and employee's innovative behaviour.

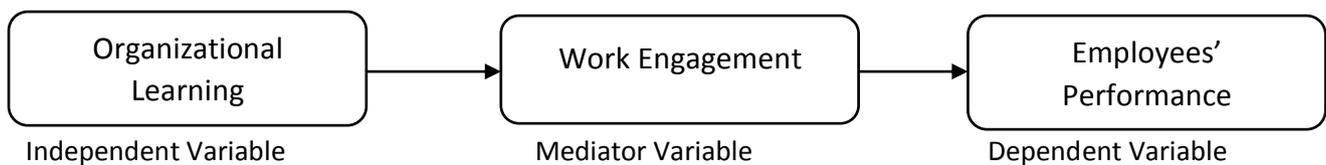


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Njoroge, Bula and Wanyoike (2021)

The construct of work engagement has empirically been measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Balducci, C., Fraccaroli, F. & Schaufeli, W. B., 2010). However, as Rich, *et al.* (2010) argue the scale does not incorporate the three dimensions (physical, emotional and cognitive) underlying the Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. Therefore, this study adapted Macey and Schneider (2008) measures of work engagement as advanced by Rich, *et al.* (2010) and Christian, *et al.* (2011). The indicators of work engagement were willingness to dedicate physical, emotional and cognitive resources to the job (task and contextual) performance. The physical construct entailed energy, resilience and vigour, emotional involved the attachment or dedication to one's work performance, and cognitive involved job focus, absorption and vigilance.

Employees' performance was studied based on the task and contextual model by Borman and

Motowidlo (1993). The indicators of employees' performance included service delivery, efficiency, team work and citizenship behaviour. Service delivery measured the quality of service in meeting customer needs, timeliness and service standards, efficiency involved performing roles competently without mistakes and solving problems related to tasks, team work entailed employee's contribution to team activities, commitment to team goals and leading team efforts, and citizenship behaviour which was measured in terms of assisting co-workers, following organizational rule and involvement in corporate affairs.

Organizational learning was studied based on Huber (1991) model. The indicators were knowledge acquisition which entail domains through which individuals, groups and the organization acquire knowledge which include congenital learning, experiential learning, searching and grafting; information distribution which involve the process

through which information and knowledge are disseminated across the organization and is indicated by communication, social networks, cross-training and inter-departmental meetings; information interpretation which refers to the process of achieving shared understanding and perspectives of organizational information which is achieved through shared perspectives, interpretative frames, unlearning and interpretation promptness; and organizational memory which describes the means by which past and present knowledge reflects on activities performed in the organization such as routines, skills databases, tacit knowledge, generation of experts and training programs.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a positivist research philosophy is appropriate for explaining relationships between variables with cause and effect attribute (Creswell, 2009). A target population of 75 firms representing 38 % of the total classified hospitality firms in Kenya was selected using purposive sampling method. The firms comprised 15 five star, 35 four star and 25 three star firms located in Nairobi and South-Rift regions of Kenya. The unit of analysis was the classified hospitality firms while the unit of observation was the functional departments in each firm. The functional departments that were considered for observation were human resources, food and beverage, and accommodation and conferencing. These departments were considered because they had relevant information for the study. Using stratified random sampling, a sample of 225 participants was selected.

Data was collected using a questionnaire. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed comprising both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents who comprised a human resource manager, food and beverage manager, and accommodation and conferencing manager from each selected firm. The questionnaire was delivered by hand to each

respondent and collected later by the researcher. The pilot study was conducted and after revision of the questionnaire, data was collected over a period of one month. In order to ensure that the research instrument measured what it was purported to measure (Cooper & Schindler, 2013), validity and reliability were ascertained. The variables studied were operationalized using measures that have been validated in previous studies. To test the reliability of the quantitative measures, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient statistical method was used to measure internal consistency of the multiple Likert questions (Saunders, *et al.* 2009). Internal consistency of questionnaire items was considered adequate if they had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient value of 0.7 or higher (Hair, *et al.* 2012).

Data was analyzed and interpreted using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics that were used are mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics done included multiple regression and correlation analyses to measure causal relationship between and among study constructs and test hypotheses. In particular, regression analysis was used to test the mediation effect of work engagement on the relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance. Pearson correlation was used to determine the association between two sets variables, that is, organizational learning and employees' performance, organizational learning and work engagement, and work engagement and employees' performance. The strength and direction of linear relationships between pairs of study variables were measured.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Reliability of Research Instrument

The results of reliability test presented in table 1 reveal that the questionnaire had internal consistency since all items had a coefficient value greater than 0.7 as recommended by Hair, *et al.* (2012).

Table 1: Reliability Test Results

| Variables | No. of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|--------------|------------------|
| Organizational Learning (Independent variable) | 12 | 0.862 |
| Work Engagement (Mediator Variable) | 9 | 0.881 |
| Employees' Performance (Dependent Variable) | 12 | 0.916 |

Source: Njoroge, Bula and Wanyoike (2021)

Level of Work Engagement in Hospitality Firms

A nine-item scale was used to examine the level of work engagement in the hospitality firms. Using a five-point Likert scale from 1 "strongly disagree" to

5 "strongly agree," respondents were required to indicate their extent of agreement with item statements. The results were summarized in table 2.

Table 2: Level of Work Engagement in Hospitality Firms

| Statements on work engagement | Mean | Std. Dev |
|---|-------|----------|
| Employees who work with intensity record better performance | 4.125 | 0.677 |
| Employees who strive to excel in their work record a higher quality output | 4.068 | 0.762 |
| Employee who devote a lot of energy in their work have a higher quantity of output | 3.942 | 0.906 |
| Employees who are enthusiastic about their work are more willing to take up additional responsibilities | 3.764 | 0.888 |
| Employees who are proud of their work are more loyal | 3.539 | 1.075 |
| Employees who take their work as positive challenge are able to solve work related problems | 3.758 | 0.971 |
| Employees who are focused on their work are able to meet performance standards | 4.299 | 0.581 |
| Employees who pay a lot of attention to their work make fewer mistakes | 3.972 | 0.857 |
| Employees who are absorbed in their work have lower intentions to leave the organization | 3.715 | 1.004 |

Likert scale (1 -5): ≤ 2.49 = Low; $\geq 2.50 \leq 3.49$ = Moderate; ≥ 3.50 = High.

Source: Njoroge, Bula and Wanyoike (2021)

From the results presented in table 2, it was evident that there is a high level of work engagement in the classified hospitality firms with most items recording a mean above 3.500. On items measuring physical engagement, the results indicate that employees who work with intensity record better performance (Mean 4.125), those that strive to excel in their work have higher quality output (Mean 4.068) and those that who devote a lot of energy in their work have higher quantity of output (Mean 3.942). In terms of emotional engagement, it is evident that employees who are enthusiastic about their work are more willing to take up additional responsibilities (Mean 3.764), those who are proud of their work are more loyal to the

organization (Mean 3.539) and those who take their work as a positive challenge are able to solve work related problems (Mean 3.758).

Cognitive engagement measures including focus, attention and absorption recorded high means in terms of their influence on employees' behaviour. The results show that employees who are focused often meet their performance standards (Mean 4.299), those who pay attention to their work make fewer mistakes (Mean 3.972) and those who are absorbed in their work have lower intentions to leave the organization (Mean 3.715). These results are consistent with empirical studies (Anitha, 2014) which opine that the level of employees' behaviour

and output is influenced by work engagement and also resonate with Rich, *et al.* (2010) view that work engagement influences job performance dimensions of task performance and citizenship behaviour.

Organizational Learning and Work Engagement

Using a five-point Likert scale from 1 “very low” to 5 “very high,” respondents were required to indicate the extent to which organizational learning indicators influence work engagement. The results showed a high level of influence of knowledge acquisition with 37% of respondents rating it high and 21% very high. Twenty percent of the respondents rated the influence moderately and 10% and 20% rated it very low and low respectively. Of the total respondents, 41% consider information distribution to have a high influence and 24% very high influence. Only 8% and 9% rated the influence very low and low respectively, while 18% considered it moderate. The results showed that 47% of the respondents rated the influence of information interpretation on work engagement as both high or very high, 26% as moderate and 27% as either low or very low.

On the level of influence of organizational memory on work engagement, 40% and 20% of the respondents considered it to be high and very high respectively. However, 20% of the respondents felt the influence was moderate while 19% rated the influence as either low or very low. The findings are consistent with past studies that have drawn a link between organizational learning aspects and work engagement (Bratianu, 2015; Malik, 2017; Lin & Lee, 2017). The results explain the importance of knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation and organizational memory in enhancing work engagement in the organization.

Work Engagement and Employees’ Performance

The study sought to establish the extent to which physical engagement, emotional engagement and cognitive engagement influence employees’ performance indicators of service delivery, efficiency, teamwork and citizenship behaviour. The results were summarized in table 3.

Table 3: Level of Influence of Work engagement on Employees’ Performance Dimensions

| Work Engagement Indicators | Employees’ Performance Dimension | Mean | Std dev |
|---|----------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Physical Engagement (Energy, effort, vigour) | Service Delivery | 4.125 | 0.797 |
| | Efficiency | 4.033 | 0.848 |
| | Team Work | 3.750 | 1.073 |
| | Citizenship Behaviour | 3.694 | 0.992 |
| Emotional Engagement (enthusiasm, passion, dedication) | Service Delivery | 4.277 | 0.746 |
| | Efficiency | 4.181 | 0.799 |
| | Team Work | 3.993 | 0.801 |
| | Citizenship Behaviour | 3.682 | 0.938 |
| Cognitive Engagement (job focus, absorption, vigilance) | Service Delivery | 3.965 | 0.849 |
| | Efficiency | 4.001 | 0.852 |
| | Team Work | 3.516 | 1.007 |
| | Citizenship Behaviour | 3.597 | 0.962 |

Likert scale (1 -5): ≤ 2.49 = Low; ≥ 2.50 ≤ 3.49 = Moderate; ≥ 3.50 = High.

Source: Njoroge, Bula and Wanyoike (2021)

The results in table 3 showed that physical engagement, described in terms of vigour, effort and energy, had a lot of influence on employees’

performance indicators of service delivery, efficiency, team work and citizenship behaviour. The highest level of influence on service delivery

(Mean 4.125) followed by efficiency (Mean 4.033), team work (Mean 3.750) and citizenship behaviour (Mean 3.694). Emotional engagement, described in terms of dedication, enthusiasm and passion, had a high influence employees' performance aspects including service delivery, efficiency, teamwork and citizenship behaviour. The highest level of influence of emotional engagement is on efficiency (Mean 4.277) followed by service delivery (Mean 4.181), teamwork (Mean 3.993) and citizenship behaviour (3.682). It is also evident from the findings that cognitive engagement, that is focus, absorption and vigilance, has more influence on service delivery (Mean 3.965). On efficiency, the influence is relatively high (4.001). The influence on team work and citizenship behaviour is moderate, with means of 3.516 and 3.597 respectively. These findings are

consistent with empirical literature which draw a relation between work engagement and employees' performance (Rich, *et al*, 2010; Anitha, 2014; Banihani & Syed, 2017).

Correlation Analysis

The study sought to determine whether there was relationship between study variables, that is, between organizational learning and employees' performance, organizational learning and work engagement, and work engagement and employees' performance. Pearson's correlations of dimensions were conducted to determine correlation coefficients of each variable and to establish whether the correlations were statistically significant using 2-tailed, sig. < 0.05. The results were presented in tables 4, 5 and 6.

Table 4: Correlation between Organizational Learning and Employees' Performance

| Dimension | | Employees' Performance | Knowledge Acquisition | Information Distribution | Information Interpretation | Organizational Memory |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Employees' Performance | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .764** | .785** | .549 | .712 |
| | Sig.(2-tailed) | | .001 | .000 | .035 | .017 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Njoroge, Bula and Wanyoike (2021)

The results revealed statistically significant positive correlation. Information distribution has the highest positive correlation, $r = 0.785^{**}$, $p (.000) < 0.01$, knowledge acquisition, $r = 0.764^{**}$, $p (.001) < 0.01$, organizational memory, $r = 0.712$, $p (.017) < 0.05$ and information interpretation, $r = 0.549$, $p (.017) < 0.05$.

Test of hypothesis:

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance in classified hospitality firms in Kenya

performance in classified hospitality firms in Kenya

The null hypothesis was rejected since organizational learning constructs had statistically significantly positive correlation with employees' performance, p value was less than 0.05 at 95% confidence level. These findings imply that there is positive linear relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance.

Table 5: Correlation between Organizational Learning and Work Engagement

| Dimension | | Knowledge Acquisition | Information Distribution | Information Interpretation | Organizational Memory |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Work Engagement | Pearson Correlation | .438 | .529** | .186 | .285 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.014 | 0.005 | 0.035 | 0.047 |
| | N | 162 | 162 | 162 | 162 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Njoroge, Bula and Wanyoike (2021)

From table 5, the correlation between knowledge acquisition and work engagement is moderate, $r = 0.438$. This correlation is statistically significant, $r = 0.438$, $p (0.014) < 0.05$.

Information distribution has moderate positive correlation with work engagement, which is statistically significant, $r = 0.529^{**}$, $p (0.005) < 0.05$. On the other hand information interpretation and organizational memory had weak positive correlation with work engagement although statistically significant, $r = 0.186$, $p (0.035) < 0.05$, $r = 0.285$, $p (0.047) < 0.05$ respectively.

Test of hypothesis:

H_{02} : *There is no significant relationship between organizational learning and work engagement in classified hospitality firms in Kenya*

The null hypothesis was rejected since organizational learning constructs had statistically significantly positive correlation with work engagement, p values were less than 0.05 at 95% confidence level for all variables. These findings imply that there is positive linear relationship between organizational learning and work engagement.

Table 6: Correlation between Work Engagement and Employees' Performance

| Dimension | | Physical Engagement | Emotional Engagement | Cognitive Engagement |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Employees' Performance | Pearson Correlation | .788** | .754** | .712** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.001 | 0.003 |
| | N | 162 | 162 | 162 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Njoroge, Bula and Wanyoike (2020)

The results shown in table 6 revealed that there is a strong positive correlation between work engagement and employees' performance. Correlation between physical engagement and employees performance is statistically significant, $r = 0.788^{**}$, $p (0.000) < 0.05$, emotional engagement and employees' performance is statistically significant, $r = 0.754^{**}$, $p (0.001) < 0.05$, and cognitive engagement and employees' performance is also statistically significant, $r = 0.712^{**}$, $p (0.003) < 0.05$.

Test of hypothesis:

H_{03} : *There is no significant relationship between work engagement and employees' performance in classified hospitality firms in Kenya*

The null hypothesis was rejected since work engagement constructs had statistically significantly

positive correlation with employees' performance, p values were less than 0.05 at 95% confidence level for all variables. These findings imply that there is positive linear relationship between work engagement and employees' performance.

Regression Analysis for Mediation

The study sought to determine whether work engagement has a mediating influence between organizational learning (independent variable) and employees' performance (dependent variable). Baron and Kenny's (1986) step-wise mediation model was adopted. The first step was to regress employees' performance on organizational learning to confirm whether organizational learning is a predictor of employees' performance. The results of coefficients are presented in table 7.

Table 7: Coefficients for Independent Variable

| Model | | Unstandardized coefficients | | Standardized coefficients | | |
|-------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.648 | .493 | | 3.343 | .000 |
| | Organizational learning | .386 | .077 | .429 | 5.012 | .000 |

b. Dependent Variable: employees' performance

Source: Njoroge, Bula and Wanyoike (2020)

The results of the coefficient table showed that the intercept, $\beta = 1.648$, $t = 3.343$, $p (0.000) < 0.05$, organizational learning, $\beta = 0.386$, $Beta = 0.429$, $t = 5.012$, $p (0.000) < 0.05$. The results in model 1 ($Y = 1.648 + 0.386X + \epsilon$), where $\beta = 0.386$, $Beta = 0.429$, $p (0.000) < 0.05$, indicate that there is an effect to mediate in the relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance.

The second step involved regressing work engagement (mediator variable) on organizational learning to confirm that organizational learning is a predictor of work engagement. The results of coefficients are presented in table 8.

Table 8: Coefficients for Independent variable

| Model | | Unstandardized coefficients | | Standardized coefficients | | |
|-------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.538 | .612 | | 4.147 | .000 |
| | Organizational learning | .192 | .086 | .355 | 2.232 | .000 |

b. Dependent Variable: work engagement

Source: Njoroge, Bula and Wanyoike (2020)

From the results in table 8, the linear equation was, $M_e = 2.538 + 0.192X + \epsilon$
The results in model 2 ($M_e = 2.538 + 0.192X + \epsilon$), where $\beta = 0.192$, $p (0.000) < 0.05$, which implies that there is a partial mediation.

In the third step, employee performance was regressed on both work engagement and

organizational learning to confirm whether work engagement is a significant predictor of employees' performance and the previously significant organizational learning in model 1 is now greatly reduced, if not then work engagement, is not significant. The results of coefficients were presented in table 9.

Table 9: Coefficients for Independent and Mediator Variables

| Model | | Unstandardized coefficients | | Standardized coefficients | | |
|-------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | 3.107 | .791 | | 3.928 | .005 |
| | Organizational learning | .175 | .086 | .269 | 2.035 | .002 |
| | Work engagement | .387 | .064 | .426 | 6.047 | .000 |

b. Dependent Variable: employees' performance

Source: Survey (2019)

From the results in table 9, the linear equation was $Y = 3.107 + 0.175X + 0.387M_e + \epsilon$

The results in step 3 showed that there is partial mediation, $\beta_1 = 0.175$, $p(0.002) < 0.05$, $\beta_2 = 0.387$, $p(0.000) < 0.05$. In addition, Beta (0.269) in model 3 is less than Beta (0.429) in model 1 which implies that Beta (0.426) in model 3 is statistically significant.

Test of hypothesis:

H₀₄: Work engagement has no mediation effect on the relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance in classified hospitality firms in Kenya.

The null hypothesis that proposes that work engagement has no mediation effect on the relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance is rejected at 95% confidence level since the findings indicate that work engagement has partial mediation influence on the relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance. This finding relates to empirical findings that have also established the mediation influence of work engagement (e.g. Anitha, 2014; Park, *et al.*, 2014; Lin & Lee, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study provided evidence that work engagement influence employees' outcomes. Results on physical engagement indicate that employees who work with intensity record better performance, those that strive to excel in their work have higher quality output and those that who devote a lot of energy in their work have higher quantity of output. In terms of emotional engagement, it is evident that employees who are enthusiastic about their work are more willing to take up additional responsibilities and those who take their work as a positive challenge are able to solve work related problems. In addition, cognitive engagement measures show that employees who are focused often meet their performance standards, those who pay attention to their work make fewer mistakes and those who are absorbed in their work have lower intentions to leave the

organization. These results echo Rich, *et al.* (2010) view that work engagement influences job performance.

Work engagement has correlational relationship with organizational learning and employees' performance. The correlation between knowledge acquisition and work engagement is moderate, but statistically significant, information distribution has statistically significant positive correlation. On the other hand, information interpretation and organizational memory had weak positive correlation with work engagement although statistically significant. There is strong statistically significant positive correlation between work engagement and employees' performance. These results are in consonance with empirical literature that has found correlation between work engagement and employees' performance (Christian, *et al.*, 2011). It is also evident that work engagement has partial mediation effect on the relationship between organizational learning and employees' performance. This relates to empirical findings that have also established the mediation influence of work engagement (Anitha, 2014; Park, *et al.*, 2014; Lin & Lee, 2017).

Work engagement is connected to employees' motivation, morale and job satisfaction. Organizations should manage effectively job level elements such as decision making, scope of responsibility and supervision in order to create a climate for engaged workers. Work arrangement and job autonomy are crucial in improving an employee's devotion and commitment in his role. Employees want to have some level of control of their jobs and are demoralized by over-supervision and micromanagement. Workers are more likely to put more effort, dedicate more time and remain focused in activities for which they have some level of control and accountability. This is consistent with past studies that have found similar results (Kim & Park, 2017).

It is the desire of every organization to have employees who work with vigour and energy, who are devoted and attached to their work, and have

job focus and absorption. Such a high level of engagement is positively correlated with high level of positive performance outcomes. However, to achieve such a level of engagement, it is incumbent upon the organization to create a climate supports and sustains such optimal level of work engagement. Since work engagement is connected to employees' motivation, morale and job satisfaction, the factors that drive engagement must have motivational influence. Such elements

include compensation, management support, participative decision making, job autonomy and capacity development. A learning environment provides a conducive environment for work engagement. Organizations should allow employees to have more control over their jobs as workers are more likely to put more effort, dedicate more time and remain focused in activities for which they have some level of control and accountability.

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