



**EMPLOYEE WELFARE CSR STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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### ABSTRACT

*The International Labour Organization (ILO) notes that Employee welfare should be understood as such service, facilities and amenities which may be established in or in the vicinity of undertakings to enable the persons employed in them to perform their work in healthy and peaceful surroundings and to avail facilities which improve their health and bring high morale. These are not a form of employers' goodwill or charity to the workers, but are facilitative services to build and maintain the morale of the workers to achieve the objectives of the organisation. This study aimed to assess the role of employee welfare provision as a CSR strategy that influences the performance of Public Universities in Kenya. It adopted the functional theory of welfare and sampled a total of 306 respondents from selected Public Universities in Kenya. A semi structured questionnaire was used. The study concluded that in order to maintain most efficient employees who will positively contribute to the Performance of organizations, they should be mentally and physically satisfied through provision of employee welfare programs. Provision of such programs have positive impact on employee performance which translates to overall organizational performance. The study recommended that companies should learn and implement welfare programs for improved organizational performance.*

**Key Words:** Employee Welfare, Corporate Social Responsibility

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## INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions can build strong brands by continuously expressing their unique strengths and virtues (Khan, Muttakin & Siddiqui, 2013). CSR strategic activities can be some of these unique strengths and virtues, a major part of the university brand image. The brand image represents a business's competencies, including CSR, which can be used to appeal to all stakeholders (Flatotchev & Nakajima, 2014).

A university is a part of society which aims to create new knowledge and train people to contribute to society. Almost by definition, one of the university's primary roles is providing CSR activities, e.g., academic services to society. If the university shows leadership in CSR, the brand image of the university can be enhanced among all stakeholders (Garay & Font, 2012; Chiu & Sharfman, 2011). Many institutions of higher learning conduct CSR activities to benefit their stakeholders who include administrators, lecturers, staff, and students and their communities. Universities are known as places in which students can gain knowledge and experience and are therefore platforms to promote beneficial and healthy lifestyles, that include exposure to and practice of good CSR (Jackson & Apostokalou, 2010).

Corporate social responsibility has been seen as an activity that should be carried out by all institutions (Boehe & Cruz, 2010; Wickert *et al.*, 2016). Public universities are often seen as institutions that are not established for business purpose and thus, they tend to not embrace corporate social responsibility. In reality, universities and other tertiary institutions need to carry out corporate social responsibility so as to win the goodwill of their internal and external stakeholders (Park, Chidlow & Choi, 2014). As already noted, most studies on corporate social responsibility are on large multi-national corporations while few studies have focused on higher institutions of learning (Lee, 2011).

In East Africa, corporate social responsibility has been recognized as a requirement for doing business (Waithaka, Kibera & Munyoki, 2018).

Majority of companies that adhere to the practice of CSR strategy have established full departments to demonstrate their levels of commitment to this course. Most of these companies such as Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) Group in the Banking sector, East African Breweries Limited (EABL) in the breweries sector and Safaricom in the communication sector have set up foundations that exclusively focus on working with various communities through implementing and monitoring the CSR activities in areas of their interest (Wachuka, 2016).

Corporate social responsibility can have a positive impact on human resources. According to Kazlauskaitė, Buciuniene and Turauskas (2012) a firm with good employee relations can lower its employee turnover rate and improve employee motivation. Additionally, on the basis of the experiences of large firms, such as Google, good employee relations may be important in attracting new staff. Battaglia, *et al* (2014) maintains that an explicit statement of equal employment opportunities policies has additional benefits for enterprises, as they provide the opportunity to recruit and retain the most talented employees with a competitive advantage over other companies.

### Statement of the problem

Public universities play an integral role in mentoring of the human capital which is key to Kenya achieving its strategic goal of Vision 2030. However, the proliferation of private universities has brought about stiff competition in the sector coupled with inadequate funding from the exchequer, which has affected the performance of the institutions service delivery (Shisia, Sang, Matoke & Omwario, 2014). Furthermore, in the last 5 years, public universities in Kenya have experienced numerous strikes from both teaching and non-teaching staff implying that majority of employees in public universities are dissatisfied with their working conditions (Aswani, 2013). Abdikarim (2017) also argues that financial strains and lack of adequate resources remain a bigger challenge to poor performing public

universities in Kenya while their student capacity continue to increase.

As already espoused in prior section public universities performance is integral to economic growth, development of human resources and further contribute to infrastructure development and job creation in their locality. Therefore, high performing universities are agents of economic growth (Sife, Lwoga & Sanga, 2017; Valero and Van Reenen, 2019; Volchik, Oganessian & Olejarz, 2018). There is a need for public universities in Kenya to adopt strategies that contributes to performance in terms of improved teaching and learning, research, human resources, facilities and infrastructure and financial resources to continue contributing to economic development. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is one of the areas of interest for many institutions. In recent times there has been much debate about whether corporations should be socially responsible or not and to what extent should they be responsible, (Visser, 2014). With many firms almost having similar strategies across the board, one area that has remained untapped in the market is CSR and its effectiveness on institutions of higher learning in Kenya.

A review of studies conducted on public universities performance in Kenya show that little attention has been given to the importance of CSR strategies on performance of public universities in Kenya. For instance, Shisia, *et al* (2014) conducted a study that focused on strategic innovation and performance of public universities in Kenya. The study established a significant relationship between strategic innovation in universities performance. On his part, Abdikarim, (2017) analyzed how service outsourcing and performance of universities in Kenya. Therefore, there is a conceptual gap on strategic imperatives of corporate social responsibilities for the performance of Public Universities in Kenya that needs address.

A near similarly study on influence of CSR strategies conducted by Wachuka (2016) focused on effect of corporate social responsibility strategy on performance: a case study of Equity Bank of Kenya,

Ajide and Aderemi (2014) focused on the effects of corporate social responsibility activity disclosure on corporate profitability while Ibrahim and Hamid (2020) corporate social responsibility and financial performance of listed non-financial services companies in Nigeria. These studies also indicate that there is a contextual gap since existing studies on CSR strategy on performance have not focused on institutions of higher learning yet they are major players in education, job market and economic development. Indicators of performance for universities are different from indicators of performance for other enterprises. This study therefore examined the strategic imperatives of corporate social responsibility for the performance of Public Universities in Kenya.

### **Research Objective**

The aim of this study was to evaluate the extent to which employee welfare CSR strategy related with performance of Public Universities in Kenya.

The study was guided by the following research hypothesis;

- H<sub>A</sub>: Employee Welfare CSR strategy significantly relates with performance of Public Universities in Kenya.

### **LITERATIURE REVIEW**

#### **Functional Theory of welfare**

Functional theory of labour welfare describes a fully mentally and physically satisfied worker as the most efficient. According to the theory, employee welfare strategies can be used as a means of securing, preserving and developing the efficiency and productivity of labour thus improving the overall performance of an organisation (Baptiste, 2008). The theory states that if an employer takes good care of employees through programs for housing, education, training, provision of health facilities and health insurance, the latter will be more efficient by improving production and performance (Manju& Mishra, 2007).

According to this theory, the public institutions such as universities have obligation towards their

employees by seeking to improve their welfare. Impact on Efficiency plays an important role in welfare services (Chandrasekar, 2011). Programs for housing, education and training, the provision of health facilities and health insurances, better working conditions and adequate remunerations are some of the important institutional programs of labour welfare which increases the efficiency of the workers (Jacob & Ludwig, 2012). Totality of welfare emphasizes that the concept of labour welfare must spread throughout the hierarchy of an organization. The theory works well if an employer and employees have the same goal of achieving higher organisational performance through better welfare as reflected in the support extended to employees. The functional theory of welfare is fundamental to universities management decision makers because prioritizing their employees physical and mental needs improves their welfare and in turn enhances institutions performance. The theory is adopted in the study since welfare services affect performance of employees which in turn affects organisational performance.

### **Review of Conceptual Literature**

Welfare can be construed as the overall wellbeing of an individual in relation to ecological, economic and social aspects (Othman & Othman, 2014). It is a means to keep industrial workers content so they may work effectively. Similarly, employee welfare includes both the social and economic aspects where the former deals with the solution of the negative aspects of society like hardship, poverty by use of such means as social legislation, reform, services, work and action. The latter aspect of employee welfare seeks to promote economic advancement by increasing productivity through provision of opportunities that enable the worker and their family to have a good life socially and personally (Asemah, Okpanachi, & Olumuji, 2013).

Practical policies and practices towards employees reflect an institution's intention to address the interests of employees for the purpose of satisfying their needs (Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey & Saks, 2015). These are aimed towards positive

union relations, bringing employees to participate in decision making, better remunerations and improved working conditions and generally portray a public university's CSR towards employees. By adhering to such standards, universities can then have satisfied employees who enhance their job performance and improve the performance of a university. According to Voronkova, Hordej, Barusman and Ghani (2019), working conditions that respect human dignity, equality, and social protection result in a productive workplace. A public university's social responsibility is a reputation factor and can serve to attract potential employees (Turban & Greening, 2007). Accordingly, ethical reputation contributes to job satisfaction and lower employee turnover by evoking positive reactions. Satisfied employees have greater job motivation and will work more effectively and efficiently contributing to higher levels of institutional performance (Othman & Othman, 2014).

Better employee management practices such as training and development, involvement in problem solving, progressive remuneration policies, and grievance solving procedures significantly lessen employee turnovers, increases their productivity and augment overall performance of an institution of higher learning. Borrowing from Economic theory, the degree of association of CSR and performance of a public institution takes consideration of cost-related advantages and reputation advantages (Jahan, 2015). In the business, CSR is concerned with employment, lifelong learning, consultation and participation of workers, equal opportunities and integration of people towards restructuring and progressive change. Perceptions of employees of protection and appreciation increases their productivity in production needs (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015).

According to Voronkova *et al.*, (2019), employee welfare efforts have their origin in some law to give expression to benevolent and protective feelings to employees, gain employee's loyalty and boost their morale, fight trade unionism, build up stable

workforce to diminish labour turnover and absenteeism, enhance competency and productivity amongst workers, sort tax issues, maintain social corporate relationship and make effective recruitment. These aspects attract employee commitment to take on the goals and values of a university. This is achieved through enhancing the health and safety of employees, stress management, better working conditions, better salaries and remunerations and participation in decision making (Othman *et al.*, 2014).

Simpson and Aprim (2018) explored the relevance of CSRP of institutions in attracting university students in developing countries. A survey strategy was adopted where 600 final-year undergraduate students at the premier Business School in Ghana were administered with questionnaires. Results showed relatively low level of CSR awareness, but elements of an organisation's CSRP played a determining role in their preference for a particular employer. As well, the disclosure of CSRP by an organisation is relevant in their choice of an employer. The findings suggested the need for organisations to take cognizance of the growing interest of prospective employees in working for organisations that engage in CSR activities and disclosures.

Bashir, Hassan and Cheema (2012) identified internal impact of the corporate social responsibility activities on the employees of the institutions engaged in these activities. The study explored how engagement in CSR activities by institutions affected the employees' feelings towards the institutions which was found to reshape their level of motivation, performance and intention of remaining with the institutions for longer time. Sample size for the study was 30 employees working for different business institutions in Karachi. The conclusions of the study indicated that indulgence in CSR activities by organisations positively influences employees' attitude towards the institution resulting into better level of institutional belongingness and job satisfaction.

These in turn, were found to improve institutional productivity.

The findings of a study conducted by Manyasi and Masinde (2014) showed that innovative policies concerning OHS, workplace diversity, career development opportunities, work-life balance, recognition and reward to employees guarantee higher productivity. The study was based on sugar manufacturing firms in Kenya and aimed to establish the effect of CSR initiatives that target employees on the performance of the firms. A sample size of 245 employees from sugar manufacturing firms was used, the study specifically examining the effect of provision of housing, work safety arrangements, insurance and motivation schemes to employees and how these influences performance of such firms for the period 2008 to 2012 using a descriptive causal survey research design. The research utilized both primary and secondary data collection instruments. Data was analysed using SPSS version 20 through descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Workplace diversity, Innovative policies concerning OHS, work life balance, recognition and reward to employees and career development opportunities were found to positively influence performance.

Ali, Rehman, Ali, Yousaf and Zia (2010) analysed influence of CSR on employee's institutional commitment and institutional performance. The study used exploratory approach; primary data is collected from 371 professionals working in different sectors of Pakistan. The study used SEM technique to test the hypotheses. It was established that practicing social activities especially those which are presented to the employees as one of the most important stakeholders affect positively the employees' institutional commitment. Undertaking social activities was found to positively affect institution performance as non-monetary benefits. Thus, the study found significantly positive relationship between CSR actions and employee institutional commitment, CSR and institutional performance and employee institutional commitment and institutional performance.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a positivist approach and descriptive survey design. It employed a quantitative research design which emphasizes on methodology, procedure and statistical measures to test hypothesis and make predictions. The targeted population constituted of the 31 Chartered Public Universities in Kenya. Out of these, five Universities were selected. A sample size of 306 respondents participated in the study representing a 78.26 per cent response rate. The study sampled teaching and non-teaching staff of the selected chartered Public Universities. Purposive sampling uses only those members of the population with the desired information that is relevant for the study. A pilot study was done on 5% of the sample (19 respondents) who were excluded from the main study to avoid response bias. Questionnaire was the main data collection instrument. The instrument was developed from existing literature,

was piloted and tested for validity and reliability, tests which were passed by the instrument. The education centred variable returned a cronbach coefficient of

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Results

Respondents were asked to state factors considered when the university designs employees' salary and the response were as follows in Table 1 below. Majority of the respondents among those who were interviewed at 91.3% said that the university considered level of education to designs employees' salary, 74.4% of the respondents said that the university considered level of experience to designs employees' salary, 15.2% of respondents said that the university considered level of job to designs employees' salary and lastly 3.5% of respondents did not indicate any of the designs used by the university employees' salary.

**Table 1: Summary of Welfare Facilities Provided by the Universities**

Categories of welfare Facilities	Type of welfare Facilities	Yes	No
Factors considered when the university designs employees' salary	Level of Education	91.3%	8.70%
	Level of Experience	74.4%	26.6%
	Level of job	15.2%	84.8%
	Any Other	03.5%	96.5%
Employee's welfare practices that the university has put in place	Team building	43.3%	56.7%
	Insurance welfare	84.4%	15.6%
	sponsorship for employees	35.2%	64.8%
	Any other	04.8%	95.2%
Welfare facilities has been put in place in the university	Recreational facilities that are accessible for all employees	25.8%	64.2%
	Civil society group or union	94.4%	5.60%
	Medical facilities	89.5%	10.5%
	Any other	1.30%	98.7%

On employee's welfare practices that the university had put in place, the results were as follows; team building recorded percentage of 43.3%, insurance welfare recorded 84.4%, 35.5% of the respondents indicated sponsorship for employees while the rest at 4.8% for other practices. Lastly the respondents were asked to indicate welfare facilities that had

been put in place in the university and the response were as follows; majority at 94.4% indicated Civil society group or union, 89.5% indicated medical facilities, and 25.8% indicated recreational facilities that were accessible for all employees and 1.03% did not indicate anything.

Furthermore, eleven Likert question items designed to investigate employee welfare CSR strategy in public universities in Kenya required the respondents to rating on a 5-point Likert scale

ranging 1-5 (1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=moderately agree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree) as shown in in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Descriptive Results on Employee Welfare CSR Strategy**

Statement	Likert Ratings					Mean	Std Dev
	1	2	3	4	5		
The institution designs employees' salary and remunerations by considering their level of job satisfaction and commitment	16.0%	11.4%	31.7%	19.6%	21.2%	3.19	1.33
The institution has effective health and safety programmes	14.7%	14.4%	31.0%	19.3%	20.6%	3.17	1.31
The working conditions in the institution are designed to enhance job satisfaction, commitment and performance	17.3%	13.4%	28.8%	18.6%	21.9%	3.14	1.37
Salary and remunerations of employees are commensurate with employee output	14.4%	16.0%	32.4%	20.6%	16.7%	3.09	1.27
Work life balance is designed to enhance productivity	12.7%	14.7%	31.7%	19.3%	21.6%	3.22	1.29
The university provides benefits such as insurance, medical and education for employees	16.7%	13.4%	34.3%	19.6%	16.0%	3.05	1.28
Team building activities are organised and provided by the university	15.4%	13.1%	32.4%	18.6%	20.6%	3.16	1.32
Employees are exposed to training and development	13.7%	12.4%	34.3%	22.5%	17.0%	3.17	1.25
There are welfare facilities such as participation in sports functions, transport and insurance	18.3%	13.4%	30.7%	19.3%	18.3%	3.06	1.34
There are equal and impartial employment opportunities	14.1%	13.7%	32.0%	20.3%	19.9%	3.18	1.29
There are motivation schemes to stimulate employees	13.4%	14.7%	35.6%	20.6%	15.7%	3.10	1.23
<b>Mean</b>						<b>3.14</b>	<b>1.30</b>

The composite mean score for presence of employee welfare strategies was 3.14 while the standard deviation was 1.3. This meant that respondents agreed that employee centred CSR strategies contributed highly to the performance of public universities in Kenya. The justification for this finding is based on the fact that public Universities

that works closely with employees to tailor their CSR strategies to them to reap higher benefits in terms of superior performance across various indicators. These results corroborate with those of Allyn and Bokhari, (2017).

The results were presented in table 3 below.

**Table 3 Descriptive Results for Employee Welfare CSR Strategy and Performance**

CSR Strategy	No. of items	Mean	Std Deviation
Employee welfare CSR strategy	11	3.14	1.3



On average, most of the respondents agreed to the existence of various employee welfare CSR strategy that was designed to improve performance. The results meant that respondents agreed that employee welfare CSR strategy contribute to the performance of public universities in Kenya. The findings of this study were in harmony with the studies reviewed in the literature. According to Voronkova et al., (2019), existence of employee welfare strategies aimed towards positive union relations and to bring employees to participate in decision making enhance the job performance of employees and improve the performance of a university. Similarly, Othman and Othman (2014) indicated that better employee management practices such as training and development, involvement in problem solving, progressive remuneration policies, and grievance solving procedures significantly lessen employee turnovers, increases their productivity and augment overall performance of an institution of higher learning.

### Regression Results

The empirical analysis to establish the relationship between employee welfare CSR strategy and performance of public universities in Kenya was conducted. The null hypothesis was that there was no significant influence of employee welfare CSR

strategy on performance of public universities in Kenya against the alternative that there was a significant positive influence of employee welfare CSR strategy on performance of public universities in Kenya. The hypothesis was tested by conducting simple linear regression, preliminary findings reveal that there was significant positive relationship between Employee welfare CSR strategy on Performance of public universities in Kenya

The results as demonstrated on Table 4 showed the findings between performance of public universities in Kenya and Employee welfare CSR strategy. The value of R- square value was 0.319 and .638, implying that 31.9% and 63.8% of the performance of public universities in Kenya was explained by Employee welfare CSR strategy with no moderator and with moderator. Besides that, the fitness of the model was also indicated by F-Statistics value of 142.575 and 267.483 with p-values of 0.000 which was below 0.05 and  $0.000 < 0.05$  with no moderator and with moderator. These findings implied that there was a significant influence of employee welfare CSR strategy on performance of public universities in Kenya. This meant that Employee welfare CSR strategy significantly influences Performance of public universities in Kenya.

**Table 4: Regression Analysis for Employee Welfare CSR Strategy and Performance of public universities in Kenya with no Moderator**

Model	R	R Sq.	Adjusted R Sq.	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.565 <sup>a</sup>	.319	.317	.7728953	1.875

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee welfare CSR strategy and Performance of public universities in Kenya.

### Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Sq.	Df.	Mean Sq.	F	Sig.
1	Reg	85.170	1	85.170	142.575	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual.	181.600	304	.597		
	<b>Total</b>	266.769	305			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of public universities in Kenya

a. Predictors: (constant), Employee welfare CSR strategy

### Overall regression coefficients

	Un Std Coeff		Std Coeff	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Er				Beta	Tolerance
(Constant)	1.854	.140		13.244	.000		
Employee welfare CSR strategy	.505	.042	.565	11.940	.000	1.000	1.000

Other parts of the study based on the same regression table 4, t- test was also employed to test how significant the predictor variable employee welfare CSR strategy was influencing Performance of public universities in Kenya. The figures established clearly indicate a significant relationship between the two variables with p-value= 0.000 < 0.05 for the model. The regression equations between the Performance of public universities in Kenya and employee welfare CSR strategy for the model can be expressed as;  $Y = 1.854 + .505 X_1$ . The models indicated that for every unit of Employee welfare CSR strategy, the value of performance of public universities in Kenya changes by 0.505. This showed that a unit change in employee welfare strategy would increase performance of Universities by 50.5 per cent.

The findings of this study were also consistent with the Functional theory of welfare which indicates that institutions such as universities have obligation towards their employees by seeking to improve their welfare. Provision of housing incentives, education and training, balanced diet and family planning measures are some of the important institutional programs of labour welfare which increases the efficiency of the workers which ultimately enhance performance (Jacob & Ludwig, 2012).

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that there are several employee welfare strategies in public universities in Kenya whose aim is to improve performance of these institutions. Employee welfare CSR strategies positively and significantly influence the

performance of public universities in Kenya whereby a unit change in these strategies explains a positive and significant fraction of variation in performance. When public universities in Kenya design employees' salary and remunerations by considering their level of job satisfaction and commitment, put in place effective health and safety programs, improve working conditions to enhance job satisfaction, fix salaries and remunerations of employees to be commensurate with output, design work life balance to enhance productivity and provide insurance, medical and education for employees, their overall performance is enhanced.

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that public universities in Kenya should enhance employee welfare CSR strategies because employees are the most valuable stakeholders in an institution. It was empirically shown that enhancing the welfare of employees would lead to improved performance of public universities. This can be achieved by ensuring that employee salaries and remunerations reflect their level of output, putting in place effective health and safety programs, improving working conditions, having effective work life balance policies to enhance productivity and providing insurance, medical and education for employees. When properly trained and remunerated, employees remain committed and satisfied which improves their productivity. Providing team building activities, welfare facilities such as participation in sports functions as well as designing motivation schemes would boost the morale of employees to be more productive.

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