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**EFFECTS OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN LISTED
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Sang, R., & Juma, D.

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¹ Sang, R., & ²Juma, D.

¹Master Student, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology [JKUAT], Kenya

² Doctor, Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology [JKUAT], Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The study's aim was to evaluate the effects of performance management practices on employee productivity in listed manufacturing companies at the Nairobi Securities Exchange. This was achieved by establishing the influence of performance management practices such as goal setting, personnel development, coaching and employee self-evaluation all have on employee productivity. A correlational research design was used. A case study of listed manufacturing companies in Kenya with a target population of 3501 and a sample size of 350 skilled employees selected through simple random sampling. A questionnaire was the primary data collection instrument. Data was analysed through both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study is beneficial to human resource practitioners and regulators as they seek to enhance employee productivity. The findings revealed a similarity to previous research with every indication that employee productivity is greatly enhanced through goal setting, with employee involvement in goal setting being a critical driver in attaining enhanced overall employee productivity. Goal setting has a positive average level of association with employee productivity. Organisations should set realistic goals through the involvement of all the employees who are the implementers of these goals to help them achieve superior productivity.

Key words: Goal Setting, Coaching, Employee Productivity, Personnel Development, Performance Management, Self-Evaluation

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INTRODUCTION

Performance management systems (PMS) are defined as a series of human resource management (HRM) practices, like goal-setting, coaching and appraisal, which serve to goal-set, follow-up and evaluate the efforts of employees. PMS help organisations in “identifying, measuring, and developing the performance of individuals and teams” (Aguinis, 2013). Hereby, ‘performance’ refers to every behavioural or attitudinal outcome of employees’ work activities, which acts upon public values or the goals of the organization (Van Dooren *et al.*, 2015). The aim of PMS is to progress and develop employees’ performances, as well as to ensure that their efforts are in accordance with organizational values and objectives (Aguinis, 2013; Van Dooren, Bouckaert & Halligan, 2015).

Performance management systems extend performance appraisal with goal-setting and monitoring to create a developmental process during which leaders set clear goals or expectations for their employees (i.e. what is expected of them and in which situation) and ensure frequent feedback and follow-up on those goals and expectations, feeding into performance evaluations. Subsequently, a new cycle of planning, monitoring and evaluating can begin (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Pulakos, Mueller-Hanson & Arad, 2018). Despite the fact that the nature and application of performance management systems can differ between and within organizations (i.e. suggesting they are an ‘approaches’ rather than ‘tools’), authors like Brown et al. (2018) argue that all present-day organizations have some kind of performance management system in place.

Performance management is an approach that creates a common future (vision) and goals (purposes) in an organisation, helping employees in carrying out their designated roles and tasks by contributing to the stated vision, and in so doing bettering their individual and corporate performance (Fletcher, 2002). Performance management is futuristic as in an organisation’s strategic plan, with individual employee annual

performance review being a necessity in order to fully utilize employees for optimal organisational productivity (Lola, 2007).

Performance management systems can have distinct advantages for the well-being and performance of individual employees and the organizations to which they belong (Biron, Farndale & Paauwe, 2011; Levy, Tseng, Rosen & Lueke, 2017). Among other benefits, performance management can increase employees’ self-esteem, motivation, engagement and improve communication and goal comprehension among employees and their leaders (Aguinis, Joo & Gottfredson, 2011; Aguinis, Gottfredson & Joo, 2012). These proximal or intermediate outcomes of performance management systems are seen as ultimately serving more distal organizational outcomes, including financial or operational performance benefits (Biron *et al.*, 2011; Gruman & Saks, 2011), enhanced organizational accountability, transparency and stakeholder legitimacy (Moynihan & Pandey, 2010). This causal logic follows that of the HRM value chain, which sees employees’ well-being as a crucial link between on the one hand HRM systems, such as performance management systems and on the other hand (organizational) performance) (Wright & Nishii, 2013).

Employee productivity is the measurement of the level to which employees in an organisation satisfy the desired goals and objectives, as measured by the level(s) of output of an individual or group of employees over a specified duration. An individual employee’s productivity levels are arrived at through comparing their productivity relative to the average of co-workers in the same level. The importance of productivity of the workforce cannot be underestimated as it plays a critical role in the overall organisational productivity. It thus is the role of every manager in an organisation to motivate his/her employees to achieve the desired corporate goals.

When the right people are in place, an organisation boasts of supportive systems and clear processes in

a manufacturing organisation results in efficient, smooth and effective operations (Ayoade, 2015). This is in addition to having sufficient resources to run the manufacturing operations (Bouquin, 2014). It should be noted that resources can either be strength or a weakness depending on how optimally they are utilised. Personnel and infrastructure remain a major component of manufacturing operations, even where there is a high level of process automation and system controlled design (Harmon, 2013). Financial and human resources are the two major resources that influence the overall performance of a manufacturing organisation (Budugan & Georgescu, 2009).

The effect of performance management practices on employee productivity is an important topic in the fields of human resource management and industrial relations. There is an increasing body of work that argues that the use of performance management practices that take into account comprehensive employee recruitment and selection procedures, employee involvement and training, can improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of an organizations employees while at the same time increase their motivation, reduce malingering and enhance the retention of quality employees as well as their productivity.

Statement of the Problem

Employee productivity is one of the leading factors for organisational competitiveness and this has partly led to an increase in research on how it can be improved (Bankert, Coberley, Pope & Wells, 2015). Studies in this area tend to emphasize on establishing factors that drive employee productivity and how they can be used to improve it. Some of these factors include provision of challenging job designs, motivation, training and development, incentives, rewards and recognition, appreciation, salary, bonus, remuneration, participation, autonomy, promotion, and the suitability of the organisational culture among other factors (Gilfedder, 2014). Baron and Armstrong (2007) postulate that performance

management is an integrated and strategic approach towards enhancing the employee and organizational productivity by bettering the performance of employees through developing the individuals and teams' capabilities. Some of the performance management practices that organisations use to improve their employee productivity include goal setting, employee personal development, employee coaching and use of self evaluation.

The relationship between goal setting and employee productivity should be positive; however, managers do not really understand why employees do not meet their expected levels of performance frequently. It is easy to see positive outcomes when personal development is focused and goal oriented (Thanh, Quang & Buyens, 2010). Personal development planning (PDP) imparts on the employees the skills they need to effectively execute their duties and responsibilities (Afshan, Chakrabarti & Balaji, 2014). In the absence of such skills, even highly motivated employees may be unable to exhibit the desired levels of productivity. This justifies why organisations invest significantly in training their employees. Notable employee productivity is achieved when employees receive managerial coaching (Liu & Batt, 2010). The individual self evaluation of employees assesses the ability of individuals to deliver their targets and improves employee productivity methodically (Khanna & Sharma, 2014).

A study by Odhiambo (2015) to determine the effect of performance management practices on employee productivity at Schindler Limited using a descriptive design using a sample of 108 employees found that performance appraisal leads to enhanced employee performance in organization. An effective appraisal model can enhance the interest and performance of the employees leading to the completion of specific targets geared towards attainment of corporate goals. In regards to the influence of reward systems on employee productivity the findings suggested that employees can be rewarded to meet target productivity levels.

The opportunity by the manager to formally recognize good employee performance leads to work motivation. When good performance is observed and then rewarded, the chances of it being repeated are increased, while poor performance is discouraged or even punished to decrease the chance of it happening again.

Another study by Okeke, Onekwelu, Akpua and Dunkwu (2019) on performance management and employee productivity in Nigeria using a descriptive survey research design sampled 366 respondents showed that 360 degree feedback appraisal had a significant influence on employee productivity, performance evaluation had a significant effect on employee productivity, self-assessment had no significant influence on employee productivity and performance review had a significant effect on employee productivity. The study concluded that performance management has significant effect on employee productivity in the Nigeria banking industry.

There are a number of issues facing the effective and efficient performance management systems in enhancing employee productivity. From a number of studies conducted by Erdogan (2012); Fletcher (2011); Broady-Preston and Steel (2012), they have established that linking performance based management practices with employee productivity leads to commitment employees in the appraisal system. Mone and London (2010) study found that that unfair evaluation of employee performance makes them feel insecure or discouraged leading to the development of poor relationship between the employer and employee. Caruth and Humphreys (2008) recommends that performance feedback should be fair, timely and specific in highlighting the employees progress in carry out their responsibilities (Gupta & Upadhyay, 2012) and the feedback should be often (Lee, 2005). There is however, relatively little research to support the view that performance management activities have any impact let alone having a positive impact on organizations operating within the Kenyan

economy. This called for the investigation of the current study.

Objectives of the study

The aim of the study was to evaluate the effect of performance management practices on employee productivity in listed manufacturing companies at the Nairobi Securities Exchange, NSE. The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- To determine the effect of goal setting on employee productivity in listed manufacturing companies at the NSE.
- To assess the effect of personal development planning on employee productivity in listed manufacturing companies at the NSE
- To ascertain the effect of coaching on employee productivity in listed manufacturing companies at the NSE.
- To evaluate the effect of self-evaluation on employee productivity in listed manufacturing companies at the NSE.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Locke's Goal Setting Theory

This theory is the work of Locke and Latham (1990). The theory posits that behaviour is determined by either values or intentions (goals). According to the theory, a goal is what someone is working towards achieving. Emotions play a critical role in forming value judgements, that is, one's values create a desire to do things consistent with them. Goals also affect behaviour (job performance) through other mechanisms. There is a direct relationship between goals and performance (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Direct attention and action are the key success factors in the theory. When goals are challenging, they generate and mobilize energy thus increasing the willpower to perform. Under the right conditions, goal setting can be a powerful technique for motivating organization members. The following are practical suggestions for managers to consider when attempting using goal-setting to enhance motivation and performance (DuBrin, 2012; Greenberg, 2011; Newstrom, 2011). High performance goals push employees to

perform at very high levels. By allowing employees to measure their own progress in chasing after quantified organisational goals, they feel more empowered. Research indicates that specific goals help bring about other desirable organizational goals, such as reducing absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Goal orientations, according to Locke and Latham (2002) can be categorized as either learning goal orientation or performance goal orientation. Research indicates that learning goal orientation positively impacts work-related behaviours and performance (Button, Mathieu & Zajac, 1995; VandeWalle, 2001; VandeWalle, Brown, Cron & Slocum, 1999; VandeWalle, Cron, & Slocum, 2001; Van Yperson & Janssen, 2002). Today's organisational work environments require employees to be proactive, solve arising problems,

think ahead of the game by being creative and open minded, and able to adapt to stochastic and turbulent environments, hence need to be learning goal oriented (Luthans, 2011).

Team work is preferred to individual excellence in today's organisations. The combination of compatible group and individual goals is more effective than either individual or group goals alone. A related consideration is that when a team member perceives that other team members share his or her personal goals, the individual will be more satisfied and productive. A recent study of project teams indicated that a perceived fit between individual and group performance goals resulted in greater individual satisfaction and contribution to the team (Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001).

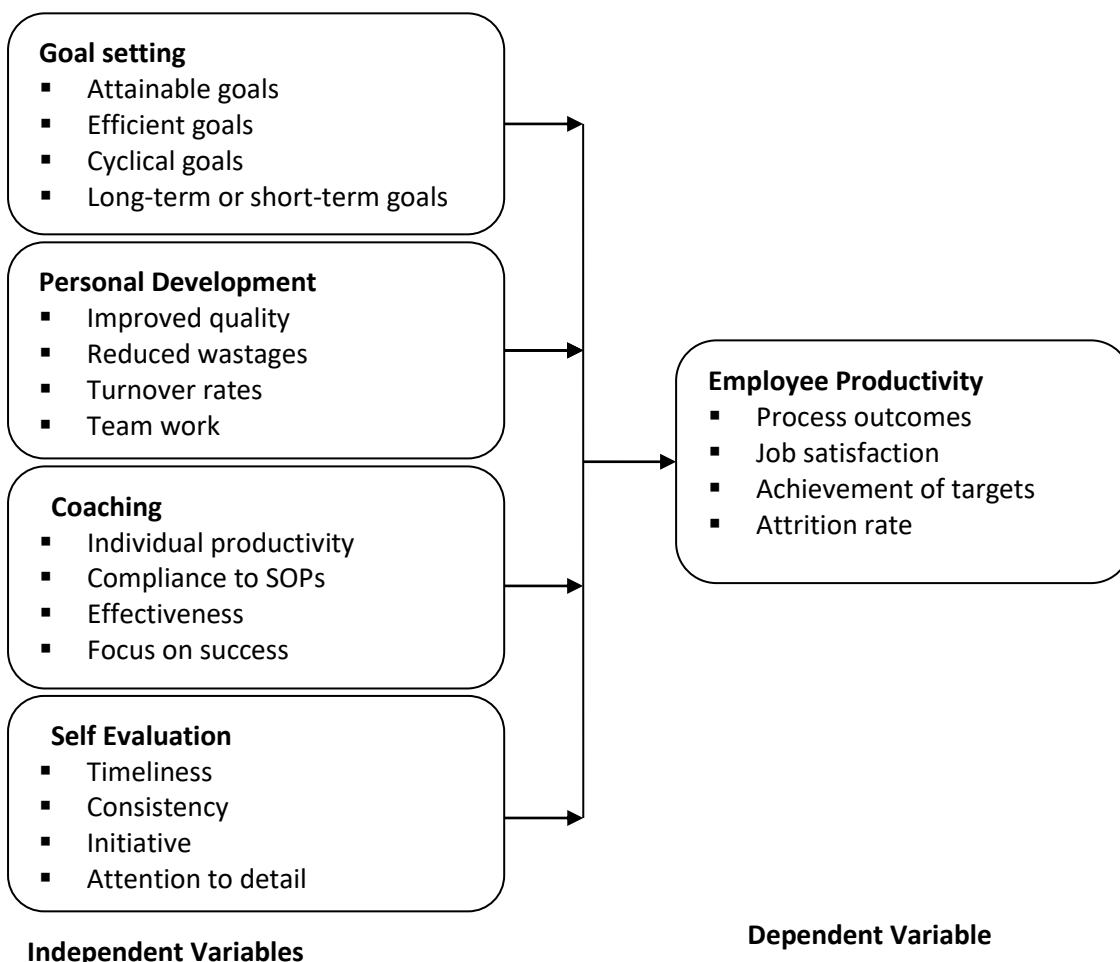


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

There has been an extensive research on the goal setting theory. As cited in Latham and Pinder (2005), Mitchell and Daniels (2003) assert that goal setting "is quite easily the single most dominant theory in the field with over a thousand articles and reviews published on the topic in a little over 30 years". In their study, goal is a broad concept encompassing other interrelated concepts like "intention, task, deadline, purpose, aim, end and objective" and is deemed as a "regulator of action" (Locke & Latham, 1990). Significantly, according to Hale and Whitlam (1998), "whether they are known as goals, targets or objectives, organisations are constantly seeking ways of achieving them because "target setting is seen as a means of helping all employees to pull in the same direction with a view to gaining competitive advantage." Locke and Latham (1990) reinforced the argument that "There is strong reason to conclude that goal setting works at the group and organisational (or unit) level as well as at the individual level."

Sauers and Bass (1990) refer to goal setting as "a formal program of setting numerical or quantitative performance goals for individuals" and that "all formal goal setting programs share the common objectives of increasing employee motivation and performance." The importance of goal is aptly defined by Mills (2002) as representing "a way of keeping score" and that "by helping employees define their personal goals, managers are putting them on the path towards achieving the organisation goals."

The goal setting theory envisages improved levels of employee productivity as employee effectiveness and performance is enhanced. Past research (Terpstra & Rozell, 1994; Latham & Lee, 1986; Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke, Shaw, Saari & Latham, 1981 cited in Terpstra & Rozell, 1994; Mento, Steel & Karren, 1987; Tubbs, 1986 cited in Terpstra & Rozell, 1994) indicates that "goal setting theory applications increase employees' levels of effort and performance" while Katzell and Guzzo (1993, cited in Terpstra & Rozell, 1994) found that

goal setting leads to "improved productivity in 95% of these experiments".

There is a positive relationship between goal setting and employee effectiveness, though bosses are always frustrated by wondering why the performance by employees is below the expected levels. Gilda (1991) argue that "the first reason may be that the employee doesn't know what is wanted". This proposition supports the notion that employees without clearly defined goals are directionless and work with little knowledge on their performance (hence are ineffective) and rarely adds value to their organisations. Management should develop the habit of letting their employees understand their roles in the organisation and their expected levels of performance and outcome through goal setting.

According to Landgon (1999), "objectives are still useful for the communication of performance intent". This argument is reinforced by Xavier (2002), who posits that clarifying expectations and the roles and responsibilities of employees through "clear communications and feedback can improve manager and employee effectiveness". Additionally, Mills, (2002) pointed out that "people who see the connection between their personal goals and the larger goals of the organisation will have a greater impact on the achievement of those goals than people who see no such connection".

Luthans (1995) in describing the theoretical background of goal setting highlighted that there was also an awareness that goal setting will not work if there was no commitment to the goals, and that "commitment is a moderator of the goal-performance relationship and a meta-analysis found that goal commitment significantly affects goal achievement." According to Latham (2004), "goal is the object or aim of an action". The author contented that people's performances can be improved through specific hard goals or "stretched" goals. He further states, "A goal is a standard for assessing one's satisfaction. In short,

employees who are committed to attaining high goals are high performers”.

METHODOLOGY

A correlation research design aided by a case study was employed for the study. The selection of a case study strategy was guided by the need to analyse a limited number of firms coupled with limited resources of time and monetary resources. A target population of 3,501 skilled employees that was drawn from nine selected firms listed in the Nairobi Securities Exchange within the manufacturing sector was desired, out of which a sample of 350 subjects were selected using systematic sampling. The sample was made up of all cadres of skilled employees whose employee productivity as driven by performance management was studied. Primary data was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire that provided an in-depth analysis of the relationship between performance management and employee productivity within the respondent organisations. Data analysis was through the mean and standard deviation for descriptive statistics, with inferential analysis applying both correlation and regression analysis to make inferences. Data was presented using tables and figures.

RESULTS

The study achieved a significant response rate of 69.43%. The study found that a majority 95.06% of the employees were involved in goal setting that affect their performance. Three factors: potential stakeholders that may be impacted by goals; timelines for a goal achievement; and total value added by pursuing a goal are all considered to a very large extent in relation to employee productivity. Reasons for pursuing the goal; intended results and measures of success; alignment with organisation’s vision, mission, values, principles, strategies, and goals; and possible roadblocks that may arise in goal setting are considered to a large extent. On the other hand, resources or capabilities needed, wanted, and available are considered to a moderate extent.

There was a significant average positive correlation between goal setting and employee productivity in Kenya’s manufacturing sector with a correlation coefficient of 0.541. This implied that a change by one unit in goal setting would result in a change in the same direction in employee productivity. If goal setting efficiency, for instance, decreases by 10 percentage points, employee productivity would decrease by 5.41 percentage points. The goal setting theory envisages improved levels of employee productivity as employee effectiveness and performance is enhanced. Past research (Terpstra & Rozell, 1994; Latham & Lee, 1986; Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke, Shaw, Saari & Latham, 1981 cited in Terpstra & Rozell, 1994; Mento, Steel & Karren, 1987; Tubbs, 1986 cited in Terpstra & Rozell, 1994) indicates that “goal setting theory applications increase employees’ levels of effort and performance” while Katzell and Guzzo (1993, cited in Terpstra & Rozell, 1994) found that goal setting leads to “improved productivity in 95% of these experiments”.

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With a t-stat value of 2.1273 at 95% confidence level, goal setting has a high explanatory power on employee productivity in listed manufacturing organisations in Kenya. This means that null hypothesis one did not accurately predict the outcome of the study, leading to its rejection. Ayers (2015) investigates performance appraisal

programs as touted as a management control tool for implementing organizational goals and driving organizational performance but how these programs do that has not been evaluated. Results indicate employee alignment increases organizational performance whereas plan alignment does not. Strategic management proponents should take note of this outcome. Furthermore, the overall quality of a performance appraisal program moderates the alignment and organizational performance relationship. Under conditions of high- and low-performance appraisal program expectations, employee alignment can influence organizational performance, but not as expected.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In relation to the influence of goal setting on employee productivity, manufacturing organisations in Kenya are seen to have a high level of employee involvement on goal setting which increases employee productivity. Goal setting has a positive average level of association with employee productivity. The results conform with a study by OECD (2016) that concluded that goal setting is one of the most powerful and evidence-based interventions for enhancing performance, provided that moderating factors such as goal attribute, type of task, organisational context and employee characteristics are carefully taken into account. The results conform to those of a study by Asmus, Karl, Mohnen and Reinhart (2015) that found that

setting goals is one promising way to improve workers' performance in industrial workplaces and that goal setting is of high relevance even far beyond conventional set goals, being deployable to output quality and environmental objectives, too.

It was clear from the research outcome that performance management practices plays a critical role in employee productivity in an organization. Organizations should take into account the studied and other related factors in account to improve employee productivity at the least cost.

The study found a significant relationship between goal setting and employee productivity. Organisations are therefore advised to set realistic goals through the involvement of all the employees who are the implementers of these goals to help them achieve superior productivity. Similarly, personal development plans are very important in ensuring an organisation's employees perform optimally. Organisations need to customise employees' roles that enable and encourage them to contribute in ways that have personal significance. Creating opportunities for employees to do what they do best requires a company to be malleable in the way it approaches improving employee productivity. From choosing candidates that have a high sense of self-awareness to fostering an environment that embraces diversity, employers are finding that sometimes they need to sit in the passenger's seat to truly drive growth.

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