

Effects of Task Identity on the Performance of Employees of the Supreme Court of Kenya

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Abstract: The study examined the effects of task identity on the performance of employees of the supreme court of Kenya. A cross-sectional survey and a case study were employed. A sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents was selected to participate in the study. The study used both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The study used two factor theory, the job characteristic model and the ERG theory to be able to support the study and show the relationship between the objectives and the study that was conducted in regards to how it affected the employee performance in the judiciary. It was realised that majority of the respondents were in strong agreement that their job was designed in such a way that it had a beginning and an end. This led to the confirmation that task identity affected employee performance in that there were some duties which needed more than one person to fulfil hence everyone had a part to play so that eventually when they all finished their tasks the tasks would all be combined in to one finished product hence marking completion of the task. So everyone had to be at par for their tasks to be completed or else if some completed and others did not then the job would be incomplete. This would affect their performance levels.

Keywords: Task Identity, Performance, and Judiciary.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Kenyan courts operate at two levels; Superior Courts and Subordinate Courts. The Superior Court consist of Supreme Court, Court of Appeal and High Court while the Subordinate Courts consist Resident Magistrate Court, Kadhi Courts, Court Martials, Tribunals, District Magistrate Courts Classes 1st, 2nd and 3rd. District Magistrate courts are situated in all the districts. Both civil and criminal appeals move from up the hierarchy from the lowest court. The Supreme Court was established pursuant to Article 163 of the Constitution of Kenya and the Supreme Court Act, 2011. It comprises of 7 (Seven) Judges: the Chief Justice, who is the president of the Court, the Deputy Chief Justice, who is the deputy to the Chief Justice and the vice-president of the court and five other judges. The Current Chief Justice is Dr. Willy Mutunga who assumed office on 20th June 2011.

The Supreme Court is the highest court in the land and all courts, other than the Supreme Court, are bound by its decisions. The Supreme Court is it is said to be properly constituted for purposes of its proceedings when it has a composition of five judges. It has exclusive original jurisdiction to hear and determine disputes relating to the elections to the office of President under Article 140 and subject to clause (4) and (5) of Article 163 of the Constitution (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). It also has appellate jurisdiction over matters emerging from the Court of Appeal and other courts or national tribunals as may be prescribed by statute or national legislation. Appeals from the Court of Appeal to the Supreme Court are as a matter of right in any case involving the interpretation or application of this Constitution and in any other case in which the Supreme Court, or the Court of Appeal, certifies that a matter of general public importance is involved, subject to clause (5).The Supreme Court may review a certification by the Court of Appeal and either affirms, vary or overturn it.

Before the advent of colonialist the communities living in present day Kenya administered justice at the family, shrines, village elders and as a last resort their chiefs. Other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms that were also applied

included reconciliation, mediation and arbitration. The colonialists introduced a dual judicial system, one for the Kenyans African native and another for European settlers (Ashiq Hussein, 2003). At independence the Kenyan Judiciary was transformed into a unified judicial system which applies both English law and African Customary law. This was done through enactment of three major laws, the Judicature Act (Chapter 8), the Magistrates' Courts Act (Chapter 10), the Armed Forces Act (Cap. 199) and the Kadhi Courts Act (Chapter 11). The Kenyan judiciary system therefore discharged its mandate through the Court Systems (structure), the Judicial Service Commission and The National Council for Law Reporting. (Tudor Jackson, 1992).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Employees have different expectations of their employers and different views of what they think their employer has a right to expect of them. They vary widely from what they want from their jobs. Employees expect to be motivated, and they expect to handle tasks that give them satisfaction. Thus this research will resort to finding out the significant relationship between job design and employee performance. Nahrgang, and Morgeson (2007) noted that there are weaknesses in importance and impact of job design, Morgeson and Campion (2003) and Humphrey et al. (2007), highlighted the need for additional theory construction and more empirical research in this area. The apparent decline of interest in work identity research is troubling. This reduced research interest in recent times is all the more surprising given the resurgent interest in job design in organizations (Morgeson and Campion, 2003). The benefit of employee performance arising from job design may not be clear to most organizations, neither is the relationship between job design and employee performance. The gap is determination of the level of significance in the relationship between job design and employee performance. The most important non-technical role is to motivate and inspire staff (Synder Gerald, June, 2007).

An analysis of data obtained from the Office of the Judiciary Ombudsperson which is an accelerated grievance management mechanism mandated to receive complaints from the public against judicial officers and staff, staff against fellow staff, and staff against the judiciary (the employer) affirms the fact that the public still has a myriad of complaints. These complaints are mainly centred on the employee performance. The major complaints are slow and poor services where it can take up to a month for a client's file to be retrieved and worked on, missing files mostly due to lack of proper storage mechanisms hence there are a lot of reports of untraceable files or even if found they are cannibalized (eaten by rats) which becomes a problem when an employee needs to be promoted, demoted or retired. Also corrupt dealings that facilitate the exchange of money between staff and client to make sure that client files are served first leading to a money making scheme that at most times exploits the client. Other problems that also featured are delayed ruling and orders, date allocation and problematic cash bail refund (Daily Nation March 6th 2012). The Judicial Case Audit and Institutional Capacity Survey (2014) revealed that as at 30th June 2013, the number of pending cases in all courts stood at 426,508. The Chief Justice, Willy Mutunga acknowledged that there is a backlog of cases up to 2014 where over 650,000 cases in all courts of the republic have not been heard in over 20 years. This is another problem that the judiciary faces due to poor job design methods and employee performance. From the above discussion, it is evident enough that there was a gap that is needed to be filled and it was because of this that the current study was done.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Task identity is the overall extent to which a job is done from the start point to finish point to the extent the outcome is predicted or visible. Task identity is an important and critical element of employee performance. Here, the entire job is viewed from a holistic view and not viewed for its components. Therefore, this highlights the various levels in which employees' performance levels are evaluated (Holmes 2006). Sandmann and Vandenberg (2005) aimed to ascertain the relationship between registered nurses' (RN) job characteristics on and their intention to leave critical care nursing in Saudi Arabia as well as their personal and work outcomes. Their study utilized an exploratory, cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships the study sought to find. Respondents completed a self-administered survey including demographic items and validated measures of the variables that were studied. A convenience sample of 182 RNs working in critical care areas during the data collection period were included. Regression analysis predicting RN intention to leave found that demographic variables including age, parental status and length of ICU experience, and three of the job satisfaction subscales including perceived workload, professional support and pay and prospects for promotion, were significantly associated with the outcome variable. The study also identified the strongest support for the job characteristic model that allowed the core job dimensions to have direct and indirect effects on personal and work outcomes.

Another study conducted by Morrison, et al, (2005) about how job designs affect levels of employee control as cited in Garg and Rastogi, (2006), identified that job designs that provide for high levels of employee control also provide increased opportunities for the development and exercise of skill. Also, mediational influence of perceived skill utilization on job control job satisfaction has been observed. Garg and Rastogi, (2006) concluded that perceived work demands, job control and social support through job design leads to high productivity. Sokoya, (2000) explored the aspect of satisfaction with jobs and career, and the predictors of job satisfaction among the emerging adults in Alberta. Obtaining data from the Alberta High School Graduate Survey among a sample of 1,030 emerging adults from Alberta, it was found in his study that job design and personal characteristics tend to affect job satisfaction and that level of job satisfaction is determined by a combination of jobs, work and personal characteristics. Rotating managers to different jobs added the benefit of task variety, resulting in increased performance of employees. He thus concluded that the performance of an employee undoubtedly depends on the level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the workforce. However, this attitude is determined by a diversity of factors or predictors where contextual forces play the dominant role and the same has been reported over and over again.

Basse, (2002) aims to identify the key issues of job design research and practice to motivate employees' performance. His study therefore sought to look at job design with respect to employee motivation and job performance that skills, task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback, job security and compensation are important factors for motivating employees. The conceptual model of Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics was adopted to motivate employees' performance. The findings depicted that a dynamic managerial learning framework is required in order to enhance employees' performance to meet global challenges. He therefore recommended that attention be given specifically to the psychological needs of workers and how they may be met. The technical aspect of design in which the normal techniques of industrial engineering, organization and methods were however not employed in this study.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was the combined approaches of a cross-sectional survey and a case study. A total population of one hundred and fifty (150) employees was used in this study. Data was collected by the use of questionnaires which had both open ended and closed questions; structured and unstructured interviews were also done because employees were accessible. The data that was to be collected was qualitative and collected via random sampling technique. Data was presented in form of frequency distribution tables and also pie charts were used in presentation of data.

5. FINDINGS

Based on the results obtained in Table 1, it is evident that seventy-eight (78%) of the respondents are in strong agreement with the view that their job is designed in such a way that it obviously has a beginning and an end. 18.33% of the respondents did agree with the statement that their job is designed in such a way that it obviously has a beginning and an end. However, two (1.67%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the view that their job is designed in such a way that it obviously has a beginning and an end.

Table 1: Task Identity Analysis

Options	Weight/score (x)	Frequency (f)	Percentage of frequency (%)	fx	Average score
Strongly agree	5	78	65	390	528/120 =4.44
Agree	4	22	18.33	88	
Neutral	3	12	10	36	
Disagree	2	6	5	12	
Strongly disagree	1	2	1.67	2	
Total		120	100	528	

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the study conducted and for that matter the results obtained, the following recommendations were made in order to improve organizational productivity and workers' performance. The ability of staff to produce high-quality products and services can be affected by task identity. This includes avoiding errors in the short term, but also includes designing

jobs which encourage staff to improve the job itself in such a way as to make errors less likely. Employers should put more emphasis on task identity so that they are able to get the best out of their employees in terms of performance levels.

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