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**The Influence of Workplace Support on Employee Performance in
Technical Training Institutions in Meru County, Kenya**



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The Influence of Workplace Support on Employee Performance in Technical Training Institutions in Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose: To find out the influence of Workplace Support on employee performance in technical training institutions in Meru County, Kenya

Methodology: A descriptive research design was chosen to collect data from 890 employees in both academic and non-academic roles. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 276 participants, with the sample size determined through Yamane's formula. Data was gathered via self-administered questionnaires, which ensured the respondents' anonymity and privacy. SPSS Version 25 was used to analyze the data. The findings were presented using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, while multiple regression analysis was used for inferential statistics to explore the relationships between variables. The results were presented in tables to aid in easy interpretation.

Results: The study revealed a positive relationship between workplace support and employee performance in technical training institutions in Meru County, Kenya. The correlation coefficient of 0.530 indicated a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. The R-squared value of 0.281 suggested that workplace support accounts for 28.10% of the variance in employee performance. The regression coefficient for workplace support was 0.624, implying that a one-unit increase in workplace support leads to a significant improvement in employee performance. The F-statistic of 39.067 ($p < 0.05$) confirmed the statistical significance of the model, validating workplace support as a strong predictor of employee performance. These findings are consistent with previous research, which emphasizes the positive impact of supportive work environments on employee engagement and performance.

Unique contribution to theory, policy, and practice: This study emphasizes the critical role of wellness programs, effective communication, inclusivity, and flexible work arrangements in improving employee engagement, job satisfaction, and overall performance. The study contributes to the theoretical framework of organizational behavior by focusing on how workplace support mechanisms—such as mental health services, fitness programs, and flexible working hours—can enhance employee performance. From a policy perspective, the research stresses the importance of embedding wellness programs, inclusive communication practices, and flexible work policies into the operational structures of institutions.

Keywords: *Workplace Support, Employee Performance, Technical Training Institutions*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a key determinant in achieving organizational goals and maintaining long-term productivity and competitiveness. In technical training institutions in Meru County, Kenya, promoting high levels of performance is critical to the effective delivery of education and training, directly impacting individual and institutional growth (KICD, 2023). High employee performance not only boosts individual achievements but also enhances the institution's overall success, adaptability, and sustainability in a constantly changing educational environment (Muriuki, Nyaga & Wanjiru, 2024).

Reward management practices are a primary factor influencing employee performance. These systems, which include both financial incentives such as salaries, bonuses, and performance-based pay, as well as non-financial incentives like recognition, career development, and work-life balance policies, have a direct impact on employee motivation, job satisfaction, and performance (Wainaina & Kimani, 2023). For technical training institutions, a robust reward management system is essential to attract, retain, and motivate skilled staff while ensuring their efforts align with the institution's goals and educational standards (Jiang, Fu & Zhou, 2021).

Reward management refers to the strategic design and execution of policies and practices that offer both financial and non-financial rewards to employees. As Jiang et al. (2021) argue, the effectiveness of reward management is determined by its ability to meet employee needs, promote fairness, and encourage behavior that aligns with the organization's objectives. A strong reward system thus becomes a fundamental component of employee engagement, which in turn leads to enhanced performance in educational settings (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999).

Workplace support is a critical aspect of reward management, playing a crucial role in enhancing employee performance. Supportive work environments that focus on employee well-being, inclusivity, and flexibility improve job satisfaction, reduce stress, and increase productivity (Mwangi, Ochieng & Wambua, 2022). In the context of technical training institutions, workplace support may involve wellness programs, career development opportunities, recognition initiatives, and work-life balance policies (Nyaga & Wanjiru, 2022). These factors create a positive organizational culture where employees feel valued and motivated to perform at their best (Asare et al., 2021).

In Kenyan technical training institutions, particularly in Meru County, the introduction of reward management practices is shaped by various socio-economic and cultural factors (Hofstede, 1984). These institutions are increasingly integrating both monetary and non-monetary incentives to meet employees' financial needs while enhancing job satisfaction and performance (Brown & Jones, 2021). In the rapidly evolving educational environment, it is essential to address employee needs with well-structured reward systems to ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of these institutions (Nyaga & Wanjiru, 2022).

This study seeks to explore the influence of reward management practices, especially workplace support, on employee performance in technical training institutions in Meru County. It aims to identify which reward strategies are most effective in enhancing employee performance and how these practices align with the broader goals of the institutions. By examining the role of workplace support in reward management, the study offers valuable insights into enhancing employee engagement, retention, and institutional effectiveness within the education sector.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Employee performance in technical training institutions is essential for ensuring the delivery of quality education, skill development, and contributing to the broader growth of the economy. Reward management practices, which encompass both financial and non-financial incentives, play a key role in motivating employees, enhancing job satisfaction, and improving performance. Global research has consistently shown that structured reward systems, such as performance-based bonuses and opportunities for professional development, lead to significant improvements in employee performance and retention. For example, the International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that institutions with well-structured reward systems saw a 35% improvement in employee performance and retention (ILO, 2023). Despite these positive outcomes, many technical training institutions in Kenya, including those in Meru County, continue to face significant challenges in implementing effective reward management practices.

In Kenya, technical training institutions are struggling with issues such as high staff turnover, low morale, and ineffective reward systems, which contribute to reduced teaching effectiveness and poor employee performance. According to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), over 65% of these institutions face these challenges (KICD, 2023). Employee satisfaction in these institutions is estimated to be just 55%, far below the global average of 80% (Nyaga & Wanjiru, 2022). This dissatisfaction is further exacerbated by high absenteeism rates of 12%, leading to a 30% reduction in teaching effectiveness (Muriuki et al., 2024). However, institutions that have introduced reward strategies, such as promotions and recognition programs, have reported improvements in performance, including a 20% reduction in turnover and a 15% increase in teaching effectiveness (Mwangi et al., 2022).

The disparity between global best practices and the current situation in Kenyan technical training institutions underscores the need for research that addresses the unique challenges these institutions face in reward management. This study aims to investigate how reward management practices, particularly workplace support, influence employee performance in technical training institutions in Meru County. By addressing these challenges, the study aims to propose practical solutions that can improve employee satisfaction, reduce turnover, and enhance institutional effectiveness, ultimately contributing to the advancement of Kenya's technical education system and enriching global knowledge on reward management practices.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

To find out the influence of Workplace Support on employee performance in technical training institutions in Meru County, Kenya

1.4 Hypothesis

H₀₁: Workplace Support has no effect influence on employee performance in technical training institutions in Meru County, Kenya

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Social Exchange Theory (SET), introduced by George C. Homans in 1958, forms the theoretical basis for examining workplace support and employee performance. SET posits that workplace interactions are reciprocal exchanges where individuals seek to maximize benefits and minimize costs. Blau (1964) expanded on this theory by emphasizing the importance of trust and reciprocity in these exchanges. Employees who feel supported by their organization are more likely to respond with increased performance, greater commitment, and enhanced loyalty.

Further contributions from Emerson (1976) and Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) added power dynamics and organizational behavior to the theory, demonstrating how perceived organizational support influences employee motivation and performance. Eisenberger et al. (2001) introduced the concept of Perceived Organizational Support (POS), which suggests that employees who feel valued by their organization tend to show higher levels of engagement and are more likely to remain with the organization.

While SET has been widely praised, it has also been criticized for its oversimplified view of human behavior and its emphasis on rational decision-making (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999), as well as for focusing on individual reciprocity, which may not be applicable in collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 1984). Nonetheless, SET remains a valuable framework for understanding how workplace support impacts employee performance.

This study applies SET to explore workplace support in technical training institutions in Meru County, Kenya. It examines how support initiatives, such as wellness programs and professional development, influence employee performance, engagement, and the overall development of the institution. The results of this study contribute to a broader understanding of the role of workplace support in various organizational settings.

2.2 Empirical Review

Workplace support is essential for enhancing employee performance, particularly within technical training institutions. Various forms of support, including mentorship, wellness programs, managerial assistance, inclusivity policies, peer support, and work-life balance

initiatives, play a crucial role in boosting employee motivation, job satisfaction, and overall productivity. Studies consistently demonstrate that these support systems contribute to higher employee engagement, retention, and performance. For instance, Asare et al. (2021) found that workplace support significantly enhances employee engagement in Ghanaian technical institutions, leading to improved productivity and job satisfaction. Similarly, Eisenberger et al. (2001) emphasize that perceived organizational support fosters employees' commitment and motivation, ultimately improving their performance.

Mentorship is one of the key forms of workplace support that positively affects employee performance. According to Wainaina and Kimani (2023), mentorship programs help develop employees' skills and boost their confidence and job satisfaction. With guidance from experienced mentors, employees are better prepared to face challenges, enhance their problem-solving abilities, and increase productivity. This type of support fosters a culture of continuous learning and improvement, which is especially critical in technical training environments that focus on skill development.

Wellness programs also play a significant role in improving employee performance by promoting well-being. Kariuki and Njenga (2021) found that wellness programs, including mental health support and fitness initiatives, help employees manage stress and improve morale. These programs enable employees to maintain better physical and mental health, which improves their focus on tasks, boosting productivity and engagement.

Managerial support is another critical factor in driving employee performance. Nyaga and Wanjiru (2022) observed that employees who receive regular feedback, recognition, and support from their managers are more likely to remain motivated, loyal, and committed. When managers provide resources and recognition, it creates a positive work environment that encourages productivity and reduces turnover. Employees who feel valued are more likely to perform at their best and contribute to organizational success.

Inclusivity is also vital for enhancing employee performance. According to Mwangi et al. (2020), institutions with inclusive policies have more cohesive teams. Employees who feel valued and included are more likely to engage in collaborative behaviors, which boosts team performance. Inclusivity fosters mutual respect and helps create a culture where employees work together toward shared goals, driving innovation and improved performance.

Peer support is another critical dimension of workplace support that enhances employee performance. Ochieng and Otieno (2021) found that employees who receive support from colleagues are more engaged and committed to their roles. A collaborative environment where employees share knowledge and work together positively influences performance outcomes. In technical training institutions, peer support is especially important as employees often

collaborate to solve complex problems and share technical expertise. This type of collective support improves both individual and team performance.

Work-life balance initiatives have also been shown to improve employee performance. Asare et al. (2021) noted that employees in Ghanaian technical institutions who had access to flexible work schedules and supportive leave policies experienced higher job satisfaction and lower absenteeism. By offering employees the flexibility to balance their personal and professional lives, institutions can reduce stress and enhance morale, leading to improved job satisfaction, better focus, and higher performance.

Leadership is essential for the success of workplace support initiatives. Nkosi and Dlamini (2021) emphasized that leaders who prioritize employee well-being, foster open communication, and provide resources for growth create an environment that supports high performance. This leadership style builds trust and loyalty, boosting productivity and organizational success.

Despite the positive impacts of workplace support, challenges remain in implementation. Nabunya and Mulindwa (2020) highlighted that limited resources and insufficient training for managers can impede the effective execution of workplace support programs. To address these challenges, institutions must invest in training and resources to equip managers with the skills to support their teams effectively.

The empirical literature underscores the importance of workplace support in improving employee performance. Practices such as mentorship, wellness programs, managerial assistance, inclusivity, peer support, and work-life balance initiatives enhance employee motivation, engagement, and productivity. Although challenges exist in implementation, investing in comprehensive workplace support systems is essential for improving employee performance and achieving organizational objectives. By prioritizing these practices, technical training institutions in Meru County can foster a work environment that promotes collaboration, innovation, and success.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Meru County, Kenya. The research employed a descriptive design approach to examine the influence of reward management practices on employee performance within six technical training institutions. The target population for this study consisted of 890 employees, comprising both academic and non-academic staff working in the technical training institutions across Meru County.

To determine the sample size, a simple random sampling technique was applied, ensuring that every employee in the target population had an equal opportunity to be selected. Using the Yamane formula, the study determined a sample size of 276 employees, which includes both academic and non-academic staff. The sample was representative of the entire population, ensuring the findings could be generalized.

Data collection was performed through self-administered questionnaires, designed to capture relevant information aligned with the study's objectives. These questionnaires were distributed to the selected sample, ensuring privacy and anonymity of participants. The study's reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which was pre-tested with 10% of the sample population in a neighboring institution. Construct, content, and face validity were ensured through expert evaluation and pre-testing.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25, with the Multiple Regression Analysis method applied to evaluate the relationship between reward management practices and employee performance. Diagnostic tests including normality, linearity, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and autocorrelation tests were conducted to ensure the integrity and validity of the regression analysis. The results were presented using descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, and inferential statistics such as regression and correlation. The final findings were presented in tables for clarity.

This approach ensured that the study adhered to ethical guidelines, with participation being voluntary, confidential, and anonymous, in line with ethical research standards.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Response Rate

A sample size of 276 respondents was selected from Meru technical training institutes. Of these, 248 respondents returned the questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 89.85%. According to Fincham (2008), a response rate of 60% to 80% is acceptable for academic research, ensuring sufficient data for meaningful analysis and generalization.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Workplace Support

The study aimed to explore employees' perceptions of workplace support within technical training institutions. The results, presented in Table 2, revealed that wellness programs, including mental health and fitness initiatives, were highly rated (mean = 4.05, SD = 0.78), with 65% agreeing and 23.5% strongly agreeing. Furthermore, these wellness initiatives were found to positively influence focus and productivity (mean = 4.08, SD = 0.79), with 67.5% strongly agreeing. Inclusivity and diversity practices were also well-received, with 66.7% strongly agreeing that inclusivity contributed to a supportive work environment (mean = 4.02, SD = 0.82). The overall workplace environment and leadership support had a mean of 4.10 (SD = 0.75), reflecting strong perceptions of support from the institution. These results align with findings by Wang and Fang (2020), Patrick & Kumar (2020), and Singh et al. (2021), which highlight the significance of wellness programs, inclusivity, leadership, and resource availability in enhancing positive employee performance.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Workplace Support

Statements N=248	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Wellness programs (e.g., mental health support, fitness initiatives) are available and effective.	5(2.0%)	10(4.0%)	14(5.5%)	161(65.0%)	58(23.5%)	4.05	0.78
Wellness initiatives positively impact employees' focus and productivity.	6(2.5%)	11(4.5%)	15(6.0%)	48(19.5%)	171(67.5%)	4.08	0.79
Employees are satisfied with the wellness programs provided by the institution.	7(3.0%)	12(5.0%)	16(6.5%)	159(64.0%)	53(21.5%)	3.95	0.81
Inclusivity practices in this institution create a supportive work environment.	9(3.5%)	12(4.8%)	12(5.0%)	50(20.0%)	166(66.7%)	4.02	0.82
Diversity and inclusion policies enhance collaboration and performance among employees.	10(4.0%)	14(5.5%)	17(7.0%)	154(62.0%)	53(21.5%)	3.90	0.83
The institution values and respects diverse employee backgrounds and perspectives.	6(2.5%)	10(4.0%)	14(5.5%)	52(21.0%)	166(67.0%)	4.07	0.79
Employees are satisfied with the overall work environment and leadership support.	5(2.0%)	8(3.5%)	11(4.5%)	47(19.0%)	176(71.0%)	4.10	0.75
Workplace satisfaction directly impacts employee performance positively in this institution.	8(2.8%)	11(4.5%)	15(6.0%)	50(20.0%)	166(66.7%)	4.00	0.81
The organization provides adequate resources to support employees in their tasks.	7(3.0%)	10(4.2%)	12(5.0%)	46(18.5%)	173(69.3%)	4.05	0.80

4.3 Regression Analysis of Workplace Support and Employee Performance

The relationship between workplace support and employee performance was examined using regression analysis. The results, presented in Table 3, show a correlation coefficient of 0.530, indicating a positive association. The R-squared value of 0.281 suggests that workplace support accounts for 28.10% of the variability in employee performance. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.278 indicates that this proportion remains significant even after considering other predictors in the model. With a standard error of 0.275, the analysis reveals a small deviation from the regression line. Furthermore, the goodness of fit of the model was confirmed by significant results, indicating that workplace support plays a vital role in enhancing employee performance.

Table 3: Model Summary of Workplace Support and Employee Performance

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.530	0.281	0.278	0.275

4.5 ANOVA of Workplace Support and Employee Performance

The analysis of variance (ANOVA), as shown in Table 4.33, tested the significance of the regression model. The F-statistic of 39.067 ($p < 0.05$) confirmed the model's significance, indicating that workplace support significantly predicts employee performance. This supports findings by Robinson and White (2021) and Brown et al. (2021), who found that supportive work environments lead to higher employee engagement and productivity.

Table 4: ANOVA of Workplace Support and Employee Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	420.451	1	420.451	39.067	0.000
Residual	1078.521	109	9.896		
Total	1498.972	110			

4.6 Regression Coefficients for Workplace Support and Employee Performance

The regression analysis further revealed that the unstandardized coefficient (B) for workplace support was 0.624, indicating that an increase in workplace support by one standard unit leads to a significant increase in employee performance. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.530 indicates a strong positive relationship. The t-value of 6.250 ($p = 0.000$) supports this relationship.

The regression equation derived from the findings is: $Y = 3.456 + 0.624X_1$

Where:

Y = Employee Performance

X_1 = Workplace Support

Table 5: Regression Coefficients of Workplace Support and Employee Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	3.456	0.901		3.837	0.000
Workplace Support	0.624	0.100	0.530	6.250	0.000

These findings strongly suggest that workplace support, encompassing wellness programs, inclusivity, leadership, and resource availability, is a significant determinant of employee performance in technical training institutions in Meru County, Kenya.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary of the Findings

The study demonstrated that workplace support plays a vital role in improving employee performance. Key aspects of workplace support identified by participants included wellness programs such as mental health services, fitness initiatives, and counseling. The majority of respondents indicated that these wellness programs had a positive effect on job satisfaction, focus, and overall performance by reducing stress and enhancing productivity. Additionally, inclusive communication practices and flexible work arrangements were recognized as crucial elements in creating a supportive work environment. Participants highlighted that open communication between management and employees, as well as policies that support personal and professional needs, contributed to higher job satisfaction and increased engagement. The study also emphasized the significance of inclusivity in fostering teamwork and cultivating a positive organizational culture. These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of workplace support in enhancing employee well-being and performance.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that there is a strong positive correlation between workplace support and employee performance. Wellness programs, effective communication, inclusivity, and flexible work arrangements were identified as critical factors in creating a work environment conducive to high performance. These practices not only help reduce stress but also foster collaboration, job satisfaction, and organizational loyalty. Respondents agreed that a supportive work environment encourages engagement, reduces absenteeism, and boosts productivity, supporting findings from similar studies in the field.

5.3 Recommendations and Contributions of the Study

To strengthen workplace support, institutions should incorporate wellness programs, such as mental health services, fitness initiatives, and counseling, into their core policies. Institutions

should also introduce flexible work arrangements, including adjustable schedules and comprehensive leave options, to enable employees to effectively balance personal and professional responsibilities. Enhancing communication channels between management and staff is crucial for building collaboration, transparency, and trust within the organization. Furthermore, inclusivity practices that value diverse perspectives should be prioritized to encourage teamwork and foster a positive organizational culture. Regular assessments of current workplace support systems are recommended to ensure they remain responsive to the evolving needs of employees, contributing to the long-term success of the organization.

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