

Journal of


Business and Strategic Management

(JBSM) Employee Engagement and Performance of Law Courts
in Kenya. A Case of Milimani Law Courts in Nairobi



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Employee Engagement and Performance of Law Courts in Kenya. A Case of Milimani Law Courts in Nairobi

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigates the relationship between employee engagement and the performance of Milimani Law Courts in Nairobi, Kenya, addressing a significant gap in understanding judicial performance in developing countries.

Methodology: The study employed a descriptive research design, targeting a population of 631 individuals, including Judicial Officers, Court Assistants, Administrative Staff, and Legal Professionals. Stratified and random sampling techniques ensured a representative sample, while purposive sampling captured key stakeholder insights. Data collection utilized structured questionnaires comprising both open- and closed-ended questions.

Findings: Data analysis using SPSS revealed strong internal consistency for all variables: Cognitive Engagement ($\alpha = 0.879$), Emotional Engagement ($\alpha = 0.874$), Physical Engagement ($\alpha = 0.843$), and Court Performance ($\alpha = 0.835$). Regression analysis indicated that the three engagement factors collectively explained 97.3% of the variability in performance ($R^2 = 0.973$). The ANOVA results confirmed the model's significance ($F = 1013.714$, $p < 0.001$). Among the factors, Cognitive Engagement had the most significant impact on performance ($B = 0.706$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Emotional Engagement and Physical Engagement. The study concluded that a supportive and effective work environment, combined with transformational leadership, is critical to enhancing employee engagement and judicial performance.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Recommendations include improving working conditions, optimizing workload management, and empowering employees through targeted decision-making and training initiatives. Future research should explore the long-term effects of cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement factors on judicial performance, focusing on their sustained impact on employee morale, retention, and productivity. Specific interventions, such as tailored training programs, workload management strategies, and leadership development initiatives, should be investigated to provide actionable insights into optimizing engagement. Longitudinal studies can assess how these measures influence the judiciary's effectiveness over time, identifying best practices for scaling improvements across other courts in Kenya and similar contexts. By deepening the understanding of organizational behavior in judicial settings, such research can advance strategies to enhance court efficiency and justice delivery in developing countries.

Key Words: *Cognitive Engagement, Emotional Engagement, Physical Engagement, and Court Performance*

Background of the Study

Employee engagement, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and physical dimensions, is critical in fostering organizational effectiveness and service quality (Albrecht, 2019). Cognitive engagement refers to employees' intellectual investment in their roles, enabling them to apply problem-solving skills and innovation in judicial processes. Emotional engagement reflects the affective commitment employees have toward their work, influencing motivation, job satisfaction, and responsiveness to litigants' needs. Physical engagement denotes the energy and effort employees exert in their duties, often shaped by leadership styles and workplace conditions. In the judiciary, where efficiency and impartiality are paramount, engaged employees contribute to timely case resolution, reduced backlogs, and enhanced public trust. Cognitive engagement ensures judicial officers and administrative staff comprehend legal complexities and procedural efficiency, while emotional engagement fosters dedication to ethical service delivery. Physical engagement, influenced by supportive leadership, determines employees' willingness to go beyond routine tasks to uphold justice. Given the high stakes of judicial performance in governance and social stability, fostering engagement through workplace support, effectiveness, and leadership is essential. Without engaged personnel, inefficiencies such as delays and procedural inconsistencies arise, undermining public confidence in the legal system.

Globally, judicial systems grapple with increasing demands to boost efficiency, reduce case backlogs, and improve public satisfaction. These pressures highlight the necessity of a workforce that is both competent and deeply engaged. Hirsch (2023) asserts that global judicial reforms increasingly prioritize employee engagement as a key driver of institutional success. Tensay and Singh (2020) identified a robust positive correlation between employee engagement and performance across various sectors, including public services. Specifically, for judiciary systems, cognitive engagement enhances case processing times and judicial decision-making (Casaleiro et al., 2021). Emotional engagement nurtured by effective workplace practices bolsters communication and service delivery, while physical engagement shaped by transformative leadership sustains effort and morale, ensuring the judiciary meets its mandate effectively. In Africa, judicial systems face unique challenges, including resource constraints, high caseloads, and difficult working conditions, which undermine cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement. Rothmann and Rossouw (2020) note the limited empirical research on employee engagement in African judicial systems. However, available studies suggest that inadequate cognitive engagement and political interference hinder engagement efforts. Despite these challenges, countries like South Africa and Kenya are exploring initiatives to strengthen engagement through workplace improvements and leadership training as part of broader judicial reforms (Akpuokwe et al., 2024).

The rapid digitization of justice systems adds further complexity, demanding heightened adaptability and engagement across all dimensions. As highlighted by the United Nations (2022),

judicial systems are now required to address traditional challenges while adapting to new technologies. African courts, including those in Kenya, must strive to meet international standards of justice delivery while fostering cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement to enhance employee commitment and performance. Locally, the Kenyan judiciary has undertaken reforms to improve access to justice and service delivery. However, persistent issues such as inadequate resources, heavy workloads, and complex legal frameworks adversely impact employee engagement. The Judiciary of Kenya Annual Report (2021) identifies case backlogs as a major challenge, diminishing employee morale and engagement at Milimani Law Courts, Kenya's busiest court. Cognitive engagement is hampered by insufficient workplace support, emotional engagement suffers from overwhelming workloads, and physical engagement is challenged by a lack of effective leadership styles. Addressing these challenges is essential to fostering a motivated workforce, enhancing efficiency, and ensuring timely justice delivery.

The judiciary's performance directly affects public trust and access to justice. Low employee engagement leads to delays, reduced case quality, and diminished confidence in the legal system (Turner, 2019). For Milimani Law Courts, addressing factors such as cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement is essential to improving performance. A disengaged workforce contributes to inefficiencies, errors, and high turnover rates, exacerbating recruitment and training costs (Meshcheryakova & Fourie, 2020). The Performance Management and Measuring Understanding (PMMU) Evaluation Report 2022/2023 highlights persistent challenges and positive trends in the operations of Milimani Law Courts. Persistent issues such as delayed rulings and administrative inefficiencies highlight the need for a deeper exploration of how employee engagement impacts judicial performance (Office of the Chief Justice and President of the Supreme Court of Kenya, 2023). However, the report also underscores significant improvements across Courts, Directorates, and Units, with the judiciary's overall performance increasing from 93.71% in 2021/2022 to 97.26% in 2022/2023. Notable achievements include a rise in the Case Clearance Rate from 94% to 99% and a 19% reduction in case backlog, decreasing from 337,676 to 276,678 cases. Additionally, the STAJ indicator for cases older than three years dropped by 13%, from 132,798 cases to 115,582 cases, reflecting progress in addressing long-standing inefficiencies (PMMU Evaluation Report, 2022/2023).

Cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement are key to maintaining high service standards and enhancing public trust in the judiciary (Nuru, 2020). A detailed investigation of Milimani Law Courts can provide insights into how these dimensions of engagement affect judicial efficiency, addressing knowledge gaps and informing policy recommendations for enhancing performance. Braganza et al. (2021) emphasize that targeted investments in cognitive, emotional and physical engagement can lead to improved operations and public service delivery. While the PMMU Evaluation Report shows notable progress, such as a 19% reduction in case backlogs and improved performance in various courts, it also highlights the need for sustainable strategies. For example, the Case Clearance Rate rose from 94% to 99%, and courts like the Employment and Labour

Relations Court achieved 100% performance. Despite these gains, exploring the link between employee engagement and judicial performance is essential to sustaining improvements. By addressing these gaps, this study aims to provide practical recommendations for strengthening court operations, enhancing service delivery, and maintaining public confidence in Kenya's judiciary.

Statement of the Problem

The Kenyan judiciary, particularly the Milimani Law Courts, faces significant operational challenges, including a backlog of over 500,000 cases as of 2022, representing approximately 25% of the national case backlog (Kisia, 2022). Despite a substantial budgetary allocation of over Kshs. 18 billion for the 2022/2023 financial year (KIPRA, 2023), persistent performance issues continue, with low employee engagement and high turnover rates being key contributing factors. The turnover rate within Kenyan public institutions, including the judiciary, stood at 15.3% in 2021, notably higher than the 9.5% average in the private sector (Public Service Commission, 2022). These factors highlight the urgent need to investigate how employee engagement can be leveraged to improve judicial performance. Employee engagement has long been recognized as a critical driver of organizational performance across various sectors, yet its specific impact within the Kenyan judiciary remains underexplored. Gallup (2020) found that organizations with higher employee engagement report 21% higher productivity and 41% lower absenteeism. Moreover, Gallup's (2024) meta-analysis revealed that engaged employees contribute to a 22% increase in profitability, a 48% reduction in safety incidents, and a 37% reduction in absenteeism. However, the relevance of these findings to the Kenyan judiciary, particularly in light of its unique operational context such as high-stakes legal decisions, rigid bureaucratic processes, and ethical considerations remains under-researched (Fletcher et al., 2020). This necessitates an investigation into how different aspects of employee engagement such as cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement affect judicial performance in the Kenyan context.

The importance of employee engagement in other sectors provides further evidence of its impact. For instance, Linge and Sikalieh (2019) demonstrated that engagement in Kenya's insurance industry resulted in a 24% increase in customer satisfaction and a 10% improvement in service delivery. Gallup (2020) reported that highly engaged employees consistently outperform their disengaged counterparts in profitability, productivity, and customer satisfaction. Rich et al. (2020) also affirmed that job engagement directly correlates with better organizational outcomes. However, the applicability of these findings to the judiciary, especially in institutions such as Milimani Law Courts, remains largely unexplored. The judiciary's high turnover rates, in particular, exacerbate operational challenges, contributing to prolonged case resolution timelines. For example, 30% of cases in 2022 took over three years to resolve (National Council on the Administration of Justice, 2022), and delays in case processing were linked to a 12% increase in public dissatisfaction (Transparency International Kenya, 2022). Given the judiciary's critical role

in upholding the rule of law and the significant investments made into its operations, there is a pressing need to explore the factors influencing judicial performance, particularly focusing on employee engagement. This study aims to address the gap in the literature by examining how employee engagement, specifically cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement, impacts judicial performance. The goal is to provide actionable insights to improve judicial efficiency and ensure that the system meets societal expectations of justice. Building on foundational studies, such as those by Nguyen and Nguyen (2020), which emphasize the need for both qualitative and quantitative data in examining employee engagement in public organizations, this research aims to fill the gap in understanding how employee engagement influences judicial performance in Kenya. The findings from this study will offer evidence-based recommendations to inform judicial policies and practices, contributing to improved judicial administration in Kenya.

Specific Objectives

- i To analyze the effect of cognitive engagement on performance at Milimani Law Courts in Kenya.
- ii To evaluate the effect of emotional engagement on performance at Milimani Law Courts in Kenya.
- iii To assess the effect of physical engagement on performance at Milimani Law Courts in Kenya.

Theoretical Review

Job Demands – Resources Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model provides a valuable framework for understanding the role of employee engagement in enhancing performance, particularly in the context of Milimani Law Courts. Developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), the model examines the balance between job demands, such as high workload, emotional strain, and time pressure, and job resources, including workplace support, professional development opportunities, and autonomy. In terms of cognitive engagement, the JD-R Model highlights how adequate job resources, such as support from colleagues or supervisors, can help employees manage the cognitive load imposed by job demands. This balance is crucial for fostering engagement, which in turn improves job performance. The model also addresses emotional engagement, focusing on how the emotional support and the quality of relationships at work influence employees' emotional commitment to their roles. Emotional engagement is enhanced when there are positive social exchanges within the workplace, such as a supportive work environment and effective communication. Lastly, the JD-R Model touches upon physical engagement by recognizing the role of leadership styles and the work environment in providing the necessary resources to help employees cope with job demands. In judicial settings like Milimani Law Courts, understanding how job demands and resources interact to influence cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement can help foster an environment that boosts motivation, well-being, and performance. By strategically managing job

demands and enhancing job resources, the judiciary can improve engagement levels and ensure more efficient and effective court operations.

Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory (SET), a social psychological and sociological theory, explains social and economic behavior in terms of the exchange of resources between individuals or groups. The Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains social and economic behavior as the exchange of resources between individuals or groups, emphasizing the pursuit of rewards and the avoidance of costs. Initially proposed by George Homans in the 1950s, SET suggests that individuals evaluate relationships based on a cost-benefit analysis, potentially ending exchanges if costs outweigh rewards (Cortez & Johnston, 2020). However, SET has been criticized for overlooking the role of emotions and social factors, such as job satisfaction and positive workplace relationships, which also drive behavior. Despite these limitations, SET remains valuable for understanding workplace dynamics, particularly in evaluating how incentives like salary, bonuses, and promotions impact employee motivation and performance. In this context, SET can be used to design surveys that assess employees' perceptions of rewards, helping organizations identify strategies to enhance motivation and productivity (Xu et al., 2022).

Empirical Literature Review

Cognitive Engagement on Performance of Milimani Law Courts

i. Job Demands, Resources, and Work-Life Balance

Employee engagement, specifically cognitive engagement, is significantly influenced by the availability and quality of job resources. High workloads, unclear roles, and inefficient systems can impose substantial mental strain on judicial officers and court staff, negatively affecting their ability to engage cognitively (Khamala, 2022). Cognitive engagement is particularly challenged by the complexity and urgency inherent in judicial tasks. Role ambiguity and bureaucratic inefficiencies heighten the cognitive load, making it harder for employees to focus on tasks effectively (Maslach and Leiter, 2022). These pressures can hinder employees' ability to think critically and process information, which ultimately impacts their job performance. Job resources, including training, role clarity, and support systems, play a vital role in alleviating these cognitive challenges. Demerouti and Bakker (2023) underscore the importance of clear role definitions and structured support systems in enhancing cognitive engagement. Providing employees with clear tasks and expectations helps them focus on their work with greater efficiency and reduces cognitive overload. Similarly, emotional support from colleagues and supervisors can enhance cognitive engagement by reducing stress, enabling better concentration and decision-making (Smith and Johnson, 2023). Moreover, professional development opportunities are essential, as they empower judicial staff to handle complex tasks more effectively, supporting sustained cognitive engagement. Work-life balance (WLB) is another crucial factor influencing cognitive engagement.

Employees who can manage their professional and personal responsibilities are better able to focus cognitively on their tasks. Research by Duxbury et al. (2019) and Rameshkumar (2020) highlights that WLB initiatives, such as flexible working hours and remote work, enhance employees' cognitive capacity by reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction. Flexible work arrangements help judicial staff maintain a better balance, which in turn boosts their mental focus and cognitive energy. Sitohang et al. (2023) emphasize that fostering a supportive environment through such initiatives enhances cognitive engagement by allowing employees to recharge and remain focused at work.

ii. Organizational Support, Recognition, and Career Development

Organizational support plays a critical role in enhancing cognitive engagement. When employees perceive their organization as supportive, they are more likely to be mentally focused and committed to their tasks. Eisenberger et al. (2020) found that organizational support, including the provision of resources and emotional backing, strengthens cognitive engagement. For instance, at Milimani Law Courts, offering adequate resources and a supportive work environment allows judicial officers to direct their cognitive efforts toward productive tasks rather than stress or uncertainty (Shantz et al., 2022). Recognition and reward systems are also vital for cognitive engagement. Formal and informal recognition programs can encourage employees to focus their cognitive resources on achieving organizational goals. According to Melian-Gutiérrez and Den Hartog (2023), such programs can boost cognitive engagement by affirming employees' efforts and enhancing job satisfaction. At Milimani Law Courts, recognizing achievements, whether through awards or public acknowledgment, reinforces cognitive focus and motivation, leading to better task performance. Career development initiatives also contribute to enhancing cognitive engagement. Saks (2022) asserts that opportunities for skill development and career progression strengthen employees' cognitive focus. Continuous training programs, mentorship, and access to learning opportunities help judicial staff stay informed and equipped to handle complex cases, thereby maintaining high levels of cognitive engagement. Wright et al. (2019) highlight the importance of mentorship and training in fostering intellectual stimulation and motivation, both of which are critical for sustained cognitive engagement.

iii. Work Environment, Employee Well-Being, and Cultural/Social Dynamics

The work environment significantly impacts cognitive engagement. A well-organized, ergonomically sound workspace reduces distractions and allows employees to concentrate better. Hamidi et al. (2020) found that an optimized work environment facilitates cognitive engagement by providing employees with the resources and space necessary for focused work. At Milimani Law Courts, improvements in office layout and courtroom design can reduce cognitive fatigue and improve concentration, directly benefiting judicial outcomes (Nussbaumer and Malone, 2021). Employee well-being programs also enhance cognitive engagement by supporting mental health and reducing stress. Griffith (2021) notes that programs focusing on stress management and mental

health can boost cognitive focus and reduce burnout. When employees feel supported in their mental health, they are more likely to engage cognitively in their work, leading to improved decision-making and performance. At Milimani Law Courts, prioritizing employee well-being can help maintain high levels of cognitive engagement and productivity. Cultural and social dynamics within an organization also shape cognitive engagement. Schein (2019) suggests that a culture of inclusion and fairness encourages employees to engage more cognitively by fostering a sense of trust and collaboration. Effective communication and inclusivity practices help reduce cognitive dissonance and promote a work environment where employees feel valued. At Milimani Law Courts, fostering a transparent, inclusive culture strengthens cognitive engagement by encouraging employees to work together toward common goals, thereby enhancing organizational performance (Tomic and Kovac, 2020). By aligning cognitive engagement mechanisms with employees' cognitive engagement needs, Milimani Law Courts can foster a more engaged and productive workforce. A holistic approach to addressing these factors can result in improved performance, better decision-making, and enhanced public trust in the judiciary.

Emotional Engagement on Performance of Milimani Law Courts

i. Productivity and Efficiency

Emotional engagement among employees plays a significant role in enhancing their productivity and efficiency. A structured environment with clear roles, organized processes, and efficient workflows helps employees feel valued and supported, which is crucial for emotional engagement. Studies by the World Bank (2023) suggest that judicial systems with effective case processing and minimal errors contribute to public trust, as employees who operate within such frameworks tend to develop a stronger emotional commitment to their work. Effective workplaces align employees' personal and professional goals, fostering emotional connection to organizational objectives. Lee et al. (2022) argue that inefficiencies, such as bureaucratic red tape and resource shortages, hinder productivity, which can diminish emotional engagement. Employees working in environments perceived as disorganized or inefficient are less likely to feel emotionally invested in their tasks. Conversely, Jimenez et al. (2021) found that introducing technologies like case management systems can streamline workflows, reduce repetitive tasks, and allow employees to focus on more engaging aspects of their work. This creates an emotional connection to the tasks, leading to increased engagement and satisfaction. Error rates are also a key factor in emotional engagement. Thompson et al. (2021) noted that reducing errors through training and refined processes can increase employees' confidence and emotional attachment to their work. Wright and Trevor (2023) suggested that clarity in procedures and sufficient resources reduce stress, creating a supportive atmosphere where emotional engagement can thrive. Thus, minimizing errors and ensuring clear procedures directly impact emotional engagement levels among employees. Innovation is a further driver of emotional engagement. Brown et al. (2020) observed that fostering a culture of innovation within the workplace encourages employees to actively contribute ideas, increasing

their emotional investment in the organization. Martinez (2022) reinforced this by emphasizing that innovation motivates employees, as they feel more involved in shaping the organization's future. Tailored innovation strategies at Milimani Law Courts could provide opportunities for employees to feel emotionally connected to the organization's growth and evolution.

ii. Service Delivery and Public Trust

The emotional engagement of employees in the judicial system significantly affects service delivery and public trust. Research by Smith and Johnson (2023) highlights that law courts' service quality is shaped by clear communication, responsive staff, and efficient processes all of which are influenced by emotional engagement. When employees feel emotionally connected to their roles and organizational goals, they are more likely to deliver high-quality services, positively influencing public perception. Brown and Lee (2020) found that emotional engagement is bolstered by continuous staff training, both in technical and interpersonal skills. This not only enhances service delivery but also improves morale, further boosting emotional engagement. When employees are emotionally engaged, they are more likely to demonstrate empathy and responsiveness, enhancing public trust in the judicial system. The emotional commitment of employees also influences public trust through transparent communication. Epstein and Weinshall (2021) emphasized that engaged employees who understand organizational goals and are actively involved in their achievement contribute to enhanced transparency. Chen and Wang (2019) further affirmed that emotionally engaged employees can better interact with the public, resulting in improved trust in the judicial process. Transparency and accountability are critical to strengthening public trust, and these elements are closely tied to the emotional engagement of employees. Gray and Green (2019) noted that clear procedures and decision-making processes foster accountability, which is essential for public confidence. Lee and Brown (2021) highlighted the role of technology in increasing transparency, which, in turn, provides employees with a clearer sense of purpose, fueling their emotional commitment to the organization.

iii. Organizational Performance and Outcomes

Emotional engagement in the workplace directly influences organizational performance, particularly in judicial settings where productivity, employee turnover, and organizational climate significantly impact outcomes. Brown and Lee (2020) observed that efficiency metrics in law courts can gauge employee performance and engagement, with emotionally engaged employees demonstrating higher levels of performance. Employees who feel emotionally connected to their work are more likely to perform at higher levels and contribute positively to organizational goals.

Employee turnover, often linked to emotional engagement, is a significant concern for law courts. Stapleton and Holohan (2022) argued that emotional engagement, fostered through supportive leadership, career development, and workplace support, can reduce turnover rates. Engaged employees are more likely to stay committed to their work, which is crucial for maintaining organizational stability and performance. The organizational climate also plays a vital role in

nurturing emotional engagement. Kim and Lee (2019) found that an inclusive and supportive climate encourages employees to share feedback and engage in decision-making, which fosters emotional attachment to the organization. A positive organizational climate, characterized by clear communication, employee involvement, and fair treatment, is linked to higher emotional engagement and improved performance. Emotional engagement is closely linked to employee performance. Clear work processes, organized roles, and a supportive organizational climate foster emotional investment, leading to enhanced performance, public trust, and service delivery. For Milimani Law Courts, addressing emotional engagement through targeted interventions can create a more engaged and productive workforce, improving overall organizational outcomes.

Physical Engagement on Performance of Milimani Law Courts

i. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is crucial for fostering physical engagement in law courts, particularly at Milimani Law Courts in Nairobi, Kenya (Owino et al., 2021). Key dimensions such as Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration have direct implications for employees' physical engagement with their roles. Inspirational Motivation involves articulating a compelling vision that aligns employees' efforts with organizational goals like fairness and justice, which motivates employees to commit to these goals (Cropanzano, 2020). This sense of direction not only enhances cognitive and emotional engagement but also sustains physical engagement by motivating employees to dedicate effort towards achieving organizational objectives. However, further research is needed to examine the influence of inspirational motivation on employee turnover and absenteeism in the Kenyan judiciary. Intellectual Stimulation, which encourages innovative thinking and problem-solving, plays a key role in motivating employees to actively participate in the judicial process (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2020). It fuels cognitive engagement by challenging employees to think critically, while also fostering emotional engagement through empowerment. In Milimani Law Courts, intellectual stimulation could increase both individual performance and public trust by showcasing responsiveness to societal needs. Additional research is needed to explore how intellectual stimulation affects judicial decision-making and perceptions of fairness in Kenya's legal system (Mule, 2020).

Individualized Consideration emphasizes personalized support for employees, catering to their individual needs and fostering physical engagement through mentorship and professional development (Avolio et al., 2019). By focusing on employees' specific challenges and aspirations, transformational leadership ensures that physical engagement remains high, as employees are more likely to stay committed and perform effectively. For Milimani Law Courts, this personalized approach is critical in improving job satisfaction, reducing turnover, and ultimately enhancing service delivery. However, further studies are required to understand how cultural and institutional factors influence the success of individualized consideration in Kenyan law courts. Future research should focus on how these transformational leadership elements such as Inspirational Motivation,

Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration affect physical engagement and performance in the Kenyan judiciary, particularly at Milimani Law Courts (Njenga & Ocholla, 2021). Such studies would provide valuable insights into how leadership can be leveraged to improve employee engagement and judicial outcomes.

ii. Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership, which involves Contingent Reward, Management by Exception, and Performance Monitoring, plays a significant role in physical engagement at Milimani Law Courts (Deci & Ryan, 2020). Contingent Reward, which links rewards to specific performance goals, motivates employees to engage physically by setting clear expectations and reinforcing desired behaviors. This approach ensures alignment between employee actions and organizational goals, contributing to physical engagement. However, its focus on extrinsic rewards might undermine intrinsic motivation, which could affect long-term commitment and overall physical engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2020). To maintain high engagement, transactional leadership should be complemented by transformational practices that foster a deeper connection to organizational goals. Management by Exception, which allows leaders to intervene only when necessary, focuses on maintaining stability but may hinder physical engagement by discouraging initiative and personal growth (Wright et al., 2021). While effective in ensuring operational integrity, this approach may limit opportunities for employees to contribute to organizational success. Leaders should integrate proactive strategies to enhance physical engagement, especially by promoting personal development and career growth. Performance Monitoring is essential in evaluating employee performance and ensuring accountability. By setting predefined metrics, it encourages transparency and fosters physical engagement through clear objectives and expectations. However, to maintain a healthy work environment, performance monitoring should be paired with supportive measures that prioritize employee well-being and ensure physical engagement is not solely driven by external metrics (Niemiec et al., 2021). Overall, while transactional leadership practices such as Contingent Reward, Management by Exception, and Performance Monitoring can contribute to physical engagement, their effectiveness is enhanced when combined with transformational leadership to create an environment that nurtures deeper employee involvement and enhances judicial performance. Further studies should explore the interaction between transactional leadership and organizational factors in optimizing performance and promoting physical engagement in the Kenyan judiciary.

iii. Servant Leadership

Servant leadership, which emphasizes Empathy and Listening, Community Building, and Empowerment, is vital for fostering physical engagement in law courts, particularly at Milimani Law Courts (Ghalavi & Nistiezaie, 2020). Empathy and Listening help to build trust, reduce stress, and support employees in addressing challenges, thereby improving their physical engagement. Servant leaders who show genuine care for employees' needs create an environment where staff

feel valued, enhancing their emotional and physical commitment to their roles (Sani, 2019; Zhen et al., 2021). This practice reduces turnover and increases motivation, fostering a sense of community and connection within the court system. Community Building is an essential component of servant leadership, promoting collaboration and cohesion in judicial settings. In Milimani Law Courts, where teamwork and shared responsibility are critical, servant leaders can cultivate a sense of belonging, which leads to greater physical engagement among employees. By fostering a cooperative environment, leaders help employees feel connected to the organization's larger mission, thus motivating them to work harder towards achieving organizational goals (Ehrhart & Bono, 2020).

Empowerment is central to servant leadership, as it enables employees to take initiative and actively participate in decision-making processes. Empowered employees are more likely to engage physically, as they feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for their roles (Kearney & Meier, 2021). By empowering staff, servant leadership encourages employees to contribute meaningfully to the organization, enhancing physical engagement and reinforcing a sense of fairness and justice within the court system. Despite the benefits, further research is needed to understand how servant leadership principles can be applied in the Kenyan legal context, specifically at Milimani Law Courts (Obeng & Frimpong, 2019). Future studies should examine how servant leaders foster empathy, build community, and empower employees to improve physical engagement, judicial outcomes, and public trust in the judiciary

Research Methodology

Descriptive research design was adopted and the target population included 631 respondents comprising of Judicial Officers, Court Assistants, Administrative Staff, and Legal Professionals. Cochran's formula was employed to determine the sample size of 101 respondents. A structured questionnaire was employed as the tool for data collection from the sample elements. The collected data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The multiple regression model was;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where: Y = Performance of Milimani Law Courts, β_0 = Constant (coefficient of intercept), X_1 = Cognitive Engagement, X_2 = Emotional Engagement, X_3 = Physical Engagement, $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Regression coefficients and ε = Error term.

Results

Out of 101 questionnaires distributed to Judicial Officers, Court Assistants, Administrative Staff, and Legal Professionals at Milimani Law Courts, 87 were returned, yielding a response rate of 86.2%. This high response rate indicates strong participant engagement, offering a reliable dataset for analyzing the effect of financial management.

Descriptive Analysis Results

Effect of Cognitive Engagement on Performance of Milimani Law Courts

Table 1: Cognitive Engagement

Statements on Cognitive Engagement	M	SD
The leadership at Milimani Law Courts is perceived to provide clear directions and goals.	4.31	0.720
Employees receive regular and constructive feedback from their supervisors.	4.18	0.708
Management is seen as supportive of employees' professional development and career growth.	4.32	0.690
Employees feel valued and respected by their colleagues at Milimani Law Courts.	4.33	0.996
The working conditions and environment are conducive to employees doing their jobs well.	4.06	0.907
Employees have the necessary resources and tools to perform their jobs effectively.	4.18	0.708
Employees find their work at Milimani Law Courts meaningful and fulfilling.	4.24	1.151
Employees are satisfied with the recognition they receive for their work.	4.45	0.728
Jobs at Milimani Law Courts provide employees with opportunities to learn new skills and advance their careers.	4.25	0.943
The values of Milimani Law Courts align with employees' values.	4.33	0.773
There is a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration among staff.	4.31	0.797
Employees feel that their contributions to the organization are appreciated and recognized.	4.21	1.407

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

The findings indicate that employees at Milimani Law Courts perceive a high level of cognitive engagement, with most aspects receiving favorable ratings. Employee satisfaction with recognition (4.45) stands out as the highest-rated area, suggesting effective efforts to acknowledge contributions. Employees also feel valued by colleagues (4.33) and see alignment between their values and those of the courts (4.33), indicating a strong sense of community and shared purpose. Leadership direction (4.31), teamwork (4.31), and career advancement opportunities (4.25) are viewed positively, while working conditions and environment scored slightly lower (4.06), still reflecting a generally conducive setting. Areas like access to resources and regular feedback from supervisors scored (4.18), highlighting opportunities for further improvements. Additionally, employees suggest enhancing resource allocation and creating more flexible, ergonomic workspaces to further support employee well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity. These findings indicate a workplace that fosters cognitive engagement, supports employee growth, and contributes to better performance outcomes at Milimani Law Courts.

These results are corroborated by Demerouti and Bakker (2023), who emphasize the significance of job resources, including recognition, leadership support, and alignment of personal and organizational values, in enhancing cognitive engagement and employee performance. Their Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model highlights how supportive work environments, like the one perceived at Milimani Law Courts, can mitigate job demands, enhance motivation, and drive better performance. Similar to the current findings, their study also underscores the importance of addressing areas such as resource allocation and feedback mechanisms to sustain high levels of employee engagement and productivity. Thus, the findings at Milimani Law Courts align closely with Demerouti and Bakker's empirical evidence, underscoring the critical role of cognitive engagement in fostering cognitive engagement.

Effect of Emotional Engagement on Performance of Milimani Law Courts

Table 2 Emotional Engagement

Statement on Emotional Engagement	M	SD
Employees feel motivated to perform their job duties effectively.	4.18	1.299
Employees understand the goals and objectives of Milimani Law Courts.	4.33	0.996
Employees receive adequate recognition for their work.	4.36	0.747
Employees have the necessary resources and materials/tools to perform their job well.	4.28	0.623
Employees feel that their contributions are valued by their supervisors.	4.23	1.042
There is open communication between employees and management.	4.33	0.773
The work environment at Milimani Law Courts is considered positive and supportive.	4.34	0.887
Employees can balance their workload effectively.	4.26	1.017
Employees feel that their jobs are secure at Milimani Law Courts.	4.16	0.834
Employees have a clear understanding of what is expected from them in their roles.	4.34	0.729
Employees are encouraged to share their ideas and suggestions for improvement.	4.21	1.407
Employees feel that the management at Milimani Law Courts listens to their concerns.	4.05	1.389

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

The findings reveal a strong sense of emotional engagement among employees at Milimani Law Courts. High ratings on feeling recognized for their work (4.36) and motivated to perform effectively (4.18) emphasize the critical link between emotional engagement and court performance. Employees also report a clear understanding of the court's goals and objectives (4.33), supported by an encouraging work environment (4.34) and open communication channels (4.33), fostering a positive climate conducive to effective performance. Consistent with Jimenez et al. (2021), who found that emotional engagement enhances organizational productivity by

strengthening employee motivation and alignment with organizational objectives, these results underscore the role of emotional engagement in driving performance.

Although most employees feel equipped with necessary resources (4.28) and able to manage their workload effectively (4.26), workload balance still requires improvement. Lower ratings in job security (4.16) and management responsiveness (4.05) identify areas for further development. Employees suggest addressing workload challenges, such as fluctuating case volumes and limited resources, by adopting workload management tools and strategies like task prioritization and efficient resource allocation to enhance balance and overall satisfaction.

Effect of Physical Engagement on Performance of Milimani Law Courts

Table 3: Physical Engagement

Statement on Physical Engagement	M	SD
The leadership in Milimani Law Courts provides clear goals and objectives for employees.	4.09	1.158
Leaders at Milimani Law Courts inspire employees to perform beyond their basic job requirements.	4.32	0.690
Leaders at Milimani Law Courts listen attentively to the concerns and ideas of employees.	4.32	0.723
The leadership at Milimani Law Courts empowers employees to make decisions related to their work.	4.08	1.472
Leaders at Milimani Law Courts show genuine concern for the well-being of employees.	4.23	1.309
The leadership at Milimani Law Courts encourages collaboration and teamwork among employees.	4.32	1.062
Leaders at Milimani Law Courts lead by example, demonstrating the values they expect from employees.	4.18	0.708
The leadership at Milimani Law Courts provides opportunities for professional growth and development.	4.33	0.773
Leaders at Milimani Law Courts effectively communicate changes within the organization.	4.48	0.713
The leadership at Milimani Law Courts recognizes and appreciates the contributions of employees.	4.32	1.062
Leaders at Milimani Law Courts foster a positive and inclusive work environment.	4.34	0.729
The leadership at Milimani Law Courts holds employees accountable for their performance.	4.28	0.996

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

The findings suggest that leadership at Milimani Law Courts plays a crucial role in fostering both emotional and physical engagement. Employees appreciate the leadership's strong and supportive

presence, with high ratings in various leadership qualities. Particularly, employees value effective communication regarding organizational changes (4.48) and the creation of a positive, inclusive work environment (4.34). Leaders are also seen as inspirational (4.32), attentive to employee concerns (4.32), and recognizing contributions (4.32), indicating an environment where employees feel valued and motivated. Opportunities for professional growth and development are well-regarded (4.33). However, areas like providing clear goals (4.09) and empowering employees to make work-related decisions (4.08) received slightly lower scores, suggesting room for improvement. Employees believe that strengthening empowerment through more training and encouraging autonomy could enhance leadership effectiveness. Overall, leadership is positively perceived, with minor adjustments needed to further improve clarity and employee empowerment.

The respondents also provided their opinions about specific leadership qualities they believe are lacking at Milimani Law Courts, and how can they be improved. They argued that one specific leadership quality that could be strengthened is the empowerment of employees to make decisions related to their work. This could be improved by offering more training on decision-making and encouraging a culture of autonomy, enabling employees to take ownership of their roles. Thus, the above findings were found to be in line with the studies of Cropanzano (2020); and Galan-Gómez et al. (2021). Cropanzano (2020), involves leaders articulating a compelling vision that aligns employees' efforts with the court's goals of fairness and justice. This approach fosters commitment and dedication among employees, enhancing organizational commitment and job satisfaction. However, gaps exist in empirical research, particularly in how inspirational motivation affects specific engagement metrics like absenteeism and turnover in Kenyan law courts. Also, Galan-Gómez et al. (2021) suggested that transactional leadership styles like Contingent Reward, Management by Exception, and Performance Monitoring provide a structured framework for leadership in law courts, addressing the need for clarity, adherence to standards, and performance accountability.

Performance of Milimani Law Courts

Table 4: Milimani Law Courts

Statement on Performance of Milimani Law Courts	M	SD
It is believed that Milimani Law Courts consistently meet their case resolution targets.	4.45	0.728
The case backlog at Milimani Law Courts has significantly reduced over the past year.	4.24	1.151
The quality-of-service delivery at Milimani Law Courts is consistently high.	4.08	1.472
The court's efficiency has improved as a result of better employee engagement.	4.05	1.389
There is satisfaction with the speed at which cases are processed and resolved at Milimani Law Courts.	4.28	0.623

Statement on Performance of Milimani Law Courts	M	SD
There is effective coordination and communication between different departments at Milimani Law Courts.	4.23	1.042
Employee engagement has a direct impact on the performance and efficiency of the courts.	4.32	1.062
The level of client satisfaction with services at Milimani Law Courts is high.	4.25	0.943
The workload is distributed fairly and does not hinder the court's performance.	4.33	0.996
The turnover rate at Milimani Law Courts has impacted the overall performance of the courts.	4.06	0.907
The leadership at Milimani Law Courts is believed to be committed to improving performance.	4.28	0.996
Increased employee engagement is believed to lead to further improvements in court performance.	4.31	0.797

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

The performance data for Milimani Law Courts reflects a generally positive view of their efficiency and effectiveness in several areas. Consistently achieving case resolution targets (mean 4.45) and high satisfaction with case processing speed (4.28) point to strong operational performance. Additionally, employees report fair workload distribution (4.33) and recognize that employee engagement significantly enhances court efficiency (4.32), indicating that engagement plays a crucial role in performance. However, areas such as the quality-of-service delivery (4.08) and the impact of turnover on performance (4.06) suggest potential for improvement. The reduction in case backlog (4.24) and client satisfaction (4.25) are also rated positively, but further focus on enhancing these areas could yield better results. This aligns with the findings from Tensay and Singh's (2020) study, which highlights the positive effect of employee engagement on organizational performance. The employees' views at Milimani Law Courts about the impact of engagement on court efficiency (4.32) support their assertion that a motivated workforce is key to driving operational performance. The leadership's commitment to performance improvement (4.28) and the belief that increased engagement could further boost efficiency (4.31) create a solid foundation for continued progress. To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of case resolution and backlog management, respondents suggest implementing more streamlined case processing technologies to reduce bottlenecks. Additionally, increasing employee training on case management best practices and hiring temporary staff during peak periods could help sustain improvements in backlog management, ensuring high service quality and the consistent achievement of performance targets.

Inferential Results

Model Summary

Table 5: Model Summary of Employee Engagement on Performance at Milimani Law Courts

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.987 ^a	.973	.973		.10240

The model summary demonstrates a strong positive relationship between the independent variables: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and physical engagement, and the dependent variable, performance of Milimani Law Courts. The R value of .987 indicates a very strong positive correlation between the predictors and court performance. This suggests that the combined effect of cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement is highly aligned with variations in court performance. The R Square value of .973 reveals that 97.3% of the variability in the performance of Milimani Law Courts can be explained by the model. This indicates that only 2.7% of the variability is due to factors not included in this model, highlighting its robustness and comprehensiveness. The standard error of 0.10240 shows the model's predictions are accurate, supporting its reliability in explaining the performance of Milimani Law Courts. Given these strong statistics, the model is statistically fit to explain the performance of Milimani Law Courts, as it accurately reflects the relationship between employee engagement and court performance. The results emphasize the critical role of employee engagement factors in driving court performance. Cognitive engagement fosters a conducive environment for judicial staff, enhancing their ability to perform effectively. Emotional engagement ensures operational efficiency, leading to improved outcomes. Physical engagement promotes motivation and accountability, which directly influence performance outcomes. The model strongly validates the hypothesis that cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and physical engagement significantly impact the performance of Milimani Law Courts. The high R Square and low standard error substantiate the model's reliability, while the findings underscore the importance of cultivating an engaged and supported workforce to achieve optimal judicial performance.

ANOVA

Table 6: ANOVA of Employee Engagement on Performance at Milimani Law Courts

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	31.932	3	10.644	1013.714	.000 ^b
	Residual	.870	83	.0105		
	Total	32.803	86			

The ANOVA test results indicate a statistically significant difference in performance at Milimani Law Courts based on the independent variables (cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and physical engagement) at a 0.05 significance level. The F-value (274.302) with a p-value

(0.000) demonstrates that these independent variables collectively have a significant impact on the dependent variable, which is court performance. The regression model further confirms this, with a p-value of .000, indicating a highly statistically significant model. The F-statistic (1013.714) suggests a good fit, indicating that the independent variables account for significant variation in performance outcomes. The large regression sums of squares (31.932) relative to the residual sum of squares (.870) suggests that the model explains nearly all of the variation in court performance, leaving minimal unexplained variance. These findings emphasize the critical role of employee engagement driven by cognitive engagement, emotional engagement and physical engagement in enhancing the performance of Milimani Law Courts. Addressing these factors, particularly workplace conditions and physical engagement, emerges as a key strategy for improving employee engagement and, by extension, court performance.

Coefficients of Regression

Table 7: Coefficients of Regression of Employee Engagement on Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	-.206	.086		-2.395	.019
Cognitive Engagement	.706	.047	.675	15.02	.000
Emotional Engagement	.129	.061	.137	2.115	.037
Physical Engagement	.208	.056	.200	3.714	.000

The regression coefficients table indicates that cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and physical engagement all have significant positive effects on the performance of Milimani Law Courts. Cognitive engagement has the strongest influence, with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.706 and a highly significant t-value of 15.02 ($p = 0.000$). This suggests that for every unit increase in cognitive engagement, performance improves by 0.706 units, emphasizing the critical role of supportive work environments. Physical engagement also plays a significant role, with a coefficient of 0.208 and a t-value of 3.714 ($p = 0.000$). This indicates that each unit increase in leadership effectiveness leads to a 0.208-unit improvement in performance, highlighting the importance of effective leadership in enhancing organizational outcomes. Emotional engagement while showing a smaller coefficient of 0.129, still contributes positively, with a t-value of 2.118 ($p = 0.037$). This demonstrates that enhancing emotional engagement also leads to measurable improvements in performance. The negative constant (-0.206) implies that without these engagement factors, performance would likely decline. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of boosting cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement to enhance employee engagement and performance at Milimani Law Courts in Nairobi.

Conclusion

The study concludes that cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement significantly impact employee performance at Milimani Law Courts. Cognitive engagement enhances performance through recognition, teamwork, and leadership, though improvements in working conditions and feedback mechanisms are needed. Emotional engagement fosters a positive work environment, but workload balance and management responsiveness require attention. Physical engagement is perceived positively, with strong leadership support, but employees need more decision-making autonomy and clearer goals. Addressing these gaps will enhance job satisfaction, commitment, and overall efficiency within the judiciary, ensuring a more engaged and high-performing workforce.

Recommendations

The study recommends enhancing cognitive engagement at Milimani Law Courts by investing in ergonomic workspaces, flexible work arrangements, and modern technological tools. Establishing regular feedback mechanisms and leadership training programs will empower employees and improve motivation. Emotional engagement should be strengthened through workload management tools, open communication channels, and management training in emotional intelligence. Improving physical engagement requires skills training, clear goal-setting, and participatory decision-making to boost employee confidence and accountability. By fostering a supportive, inclusive, and well-equipped work environment, the courts can enhance job satisfaction, engagement, and overall employee performance within the judiciary system.

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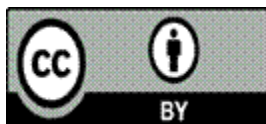
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