

The effect of diversity competence of employees on employee performance in selected Public Universities in Kenya

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Abstract: Diversity management is critical factor in employee performance in institutions of higher learning across the world. This study examined the effect of diversity competence of employees on employee performance in selected Public Universities in Kenya. A cross sectional descriptive survey design was employed for the study. The target population comprised all the 1,900 employees working in the selected Public Universities in Kenya. A sample of 330 respondents was selected using both stratified and simple random sampling methods. Data was collected using semi-structured questionnaire. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in the analysis of data. The study found existence of a positive correlation between employee performance and diversity competence of employees on employee performance in Public Universities in Kenya of 43.8%. This shows that employee diversity competency is very critical in employee performance.

Key Words: Diversity Competence, Employee Performance, Public Universities

Date of Submission: 08-11-2019

Date of Acceptance: 23-11-2019

I. Introduction

Employee diversity competence refers to the employee's ability to live and work in an environment that comprises different groups of people. It is the ability to interact effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Employee diversity competence encompasses employees' awareness of others employees cultures, openness towards those culture, negotiation skills and emotional intelligence, among other aspects. Diversity competence, also known as cultural competence, is the most importance skill that employees need not only to create a welcoming organizational climate, but also for them to work effectively within a diverse workplace (Andrade & Rivera, 2011). Diversity competence is the ability of an individual to interact effectively with people from diverse cultural background (Rivera, 2013). Garneau and Pepin (2015) asserted that diversity competence is a complex know-act that encompasses a wide range of skills that, when combined, leads to culturally congruent behaviour. These skills include awareness of own culture, knowledge of other people cultures, openness towards cultural differences, negotiation, conflict management, and tolerance to ambiguity. These studies illustrated the aspects of diversity aspects without indicating on how these aspects impact on the employee performance aspects. In Kenya, Nelson (2016) found that diversity competence played a central role in helping principals in Kenyan public secondary schools to navigate complex challenges associated with working in diverse environment. Njeru (2003) noted that the Kenya education sector harbors cultural orientations that disadvantage women and some ethnic communities from accessing education. Performance of employees is associated with various dimensions. These include relations, attitudes, and turnover of employees. The creativity and commitment of the employees further illustrate their performance. Other indicators of employee performance are the participation in team work activities, productivity levels of the workforce, and also the quality of their output. In addition, the employee performance can be espoused by the deliverables nature of productivity of the employees. The foregoing aspects explain both the task and contextual performance of employees (Jankingthong & Rurkkhum, 2012).

II. Research Methodology

Cross sectional descriptive research design was adopted. According to Bethlehem (1999), study that employ this kind of research design are undertaken to approximate the frequency of the outcome of interests for a particular target group. The unit of observation has also been defined as the identifiable organizations or physical entities, which are able to report data about their activities (Mugenda, 2003). The unit of observation

were Maasai Mara University, Chuka University, Multimedia University and the University of Eldoret. The study population comprised of a total of 1,900 employees of the four universities. These target population were aware and gave genuine and objective views on diversity dimension management in the sampled universities and its effect on employee performance. Subsequently, the total sample size for this study was determined using the formula by Israel (1992) as shown below at 95% confidence level (e = 0.05) Thus calculating the sample size; n = Sample size, N= 1900 and e = Confidence level (0.05).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Thus;

$$n = 1900 / 1 + 1900(0.05)^2 = 330.4$$

Table 1: Sample distribution of the four sampled Universities

University	Population	Sample
Maasai Mara University	431	75
Chuka University	500	87
Multi-Media University	408	71
University of Eldoret	561	98
TOTAL	1900	331

III. Research Results

3.1 General Characteristics of respondents

The findings illustrated in table 2 evident that the males were the majority of the employees in Public Universities in Kenya representing 54.1% while 45.9% were females. 39% of the respondents were employees aged between 26-35 years, 27% were between 36-45 years, 18.8% were aged 46-55 years, 8.2% were 18-25 years, 5.5% were aged 56-65 years old while only 0.7% were over 65 years. On the other hand, majority at 40.8% of the university employees engaged in this study were undergraduates, 32.9% had a postgraduate degree, 23.3% had diplomas and only 3.1% had secondary school certificate. Out of the 292 respondents, 39% indicated that they had work experience of less than 5 years, 35.6% had worked for 5-10 years, 17.8% had worked for between 10 - 20 years while those with work experience of between 20-30 years were 5.5%. Only 2.1% had worked for over 30 years.

Table 2: General Characteristics of respondents

Variable	Response	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	158	54.1
	Female	134	45.9
	Total	292	100.0
Age	18-25 years	24	8.2
	26-35 years	114	39.0
	36-45 years	81	27.7
	46-55 years	55	18.8
	56-65 years	16	5.5
	Over 65 years	2	0.7
	Total	292	100.0
Education Level	Secondary	9	3.1
	Diploma	68	23.3
	Undergraduate	119	40.8
	Post graduate	96	32.9
	Total	292	100.0
Work Experience	Less 5 years	114	39.0
	Over 5 years	104	35.6
	Over 10 years	52	17.8
	Over 20 years	16	5.5
	Over 30 years	6	2.1
	Total	292	100.0

Table 3 shows the summary of cross-tabulation of demographic factors and employee performance. The results show that it is only the level of education that was found to have significant association with employee performance.

Table 3: Summary of Cross-tabulation of Demographic factors and employee performance

Variable	Pearson Chi-Square	P	Is there a significant association?
Gender	44.128	0.090	No
Age	216.598	0.090	No
Level of education	141.086	0.043	Yes
Work experience	138.873	0.769	No

3.2 Descriptive Analysis for Employee Diversity Competency

The objective of this study was to evaluate the effect of diversity competence of employees on employee performance in selected Public Universities in Kenya. The respondents were required to indicate strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree or strongly agree on the following statements in Table 4. The study sought to establish whether employees appreciated other people's culture in the University and 56.5 percent agreed that they appreciated other people's culture, 29.1 percent strongly agreed while 8.6 percent were not sure. 3.8 percent disagreed and only 2.1 percent strongly disagreed. The mean was 4.07 with a standard deviation of 0.843. On whether the employees were open towards cultural differences in the University, 54.8 percent agreed with being very open, 30.8 percent strongly agreed while 9.2 percent was not sure. 3.1 percent of the respondents disagreed with 2.1 percent strongly disagree. The mean was 4.09 with a standard deviation of 0.838. It is important for employees to value and respect cultural differences that exist in many work places and diversity competent employees do exhibit a clear understanding of why it is crucial for employees within an organization to respect and even encourage differences in work places (Munjuri, 2012).

The researcher sought to determine whether Diversity management facilitated conflict management among employees in the university and 45.6 percent agreed that it enhanced conflict management, 25 percent agreed while 14.4% were neutral. 7.9 percent disagreed and 7.2 percent strongly disagreed. The mean was 3.73 with a standard deviation of 1.135. This was in line with Prause and Mujtaba who found that managers need to have the ability to diffuse tensions in a manner that is satisfactory to all parties involved. This in particular involved possessing a number of skills including negotiation and creative problem solving. Further, on the aspect of whether Diversity management enhanced employee perceptions and understanding of different cultures, 48.3 percent agreed that their perception and understanding was enhanced, 31.8 percent strongly agreed while 11.3 percent was not sure. 6.5 percent disagreed and 2.1 percent strongly disagreed that their perceptions and understanding of other people's culture was enhanced. The mean was 4.01 with a standard deviation of 0.938. This is in line with Wambui et al. (2013) argument that managers should act towards building an inclusive environment in their organizations and ultimately utilizing the benefits that accrue from diversity.

On the aspect of whether Diversity management enhanced understanding of diverse feelings of other employees in the University 49.7 percent agreed while 27.7 percent strongly agreed and 13.4 percent were not sure. 5.8 percent disagreed while 3.1 percent strongly disagreed that their understanding of diverse feelings of other employees was enhanced. The mean was 3.93 with a standard deviation of 1.961. Cherrington and Shuker (2012) point out that a teaching workforce that does not reflect the diversity of the students it is managing will find it very difficult to develop a curriculum that is suitable for the students.

The other aspect of interest was whether Diversity management among employees promoted team work and 47.3 percent agreed that team work was enhanced 30.5 percent strongly agreed and 15.8 percent were not sure whereas 4.1 percent disagreed, 2.4 percent strongly disagreed. The mean was 3.99 with a standard deviation of 0.919. This mirrors the findings of Sucher and Chueng (2015) in their study of the effect of cross cultural competence on team performance in hotels in Thailand. They found out that cross cultural competence had a positive effect on team performance and ultimately enhanced organizational effectiveness. Jankingthong and Rurkkhum (2012) posit that teamwork is a dimension of performance. Employees by working in an inclusive environment are able to participate more and contribute to organizational functions including participating in teamwork activities.

On whether employee diversity management boosts employee participation in institutional activities the majority of the respondents at 47.6 percent agreed so while 31.5 percent strongly agreed and 11.3 percent were not sure. 6.7 percent disagreed and 2.4 percent strongly disagreed. The mean was 3.99 with a standard deviation of 0.961. Vilela et al. (2015) brings forward the concept of contextual performance where the employee participates in activities that do not directly impact production, but are important towards inclusivity in the organization; an example being taking part in informal financial schemes among employees in an organization.

On whether employee diversity management enhances cooperation among employees, 54.8 percent agreed, 25 percent strongly agreed, 13 percent were not sure while 5.1 percent disagreed. Only 2.1 percent strongly disagreed. The mean was 3.96 with a standard deviation of 0.878.

On whether employee diversity management encourages learning among employees, the majority of the respondents at 49.3 percent agreed so while 28.8 percent strongly agreed and 11.6 percent were neutral, those that disagreed formed 8.2 percent of the total and 2.1 percent strongly disagreed. The mean was 3.95 with a standard deviation of 0.958. This concurs with Bucker et al. (2013) who in their study of employees at Azaran Industrial Group in Iran found that employees who are culturally intelligent are motivated to build relationships with people from different cultures and even learn more about them. Further, Employee diversity management builds loyalty and trust among employees, the majority of the respondents at 53.1 percent agreed and 27.1 percent strongly agreed. 9.2 percent were not sure while 7.5 percent disagreed and 3.1 percent strongly disagreed. The mean was 3.93 with a standard deviation of 0.970. A study conducted by Wambari (2010) at the ministry of

health recommended that the adoption of positive diversity management practices mentoring and succession planning programs geared towards supporting diversity and building and ensuring loyalty of employees.

From the results, majority agreed that employee diversity competency in Public Universities in Kenya exists. Respondents agreed that existence of employee diversity competency is instrumental in building loyalty and trust among employees, facilitating conflict management among employees, enhancing perceptions and understanding of different cultures and feelings among employees, promoting team work among employees, boosting employee participation in institutional activities and encouraging learning among employees. The findings are similar with those reported in Andrade and Rivera (2011) that diversity competency is the most importance skill that employees need not only to create a welcoming organizational climate, but also for them to work effectively within a diverse workplace. Johnson (2012) noted that organizations that do not embrace diversity competent employees are likely to experience problems with employee relations, employee attitudes, and high employee turnover. Similar findings are reported in Tiraieyari (2009), Hartel (2010), Hiranandani (2012), Rivera (2013), Sucher and Cheung (2015) and Garneau and Pepin (2015).

Table 4: Employee diversity Competency

Employee Diversity Competency	1 SD %	2 D %	3 NS %	4 A %	5 SA %	Mean	Std Dev
I appreciate other peoples culture in the University	2.1	3.8	8.6	56.5	29.1	4.07	0.843
I am very open towards cultural differences in the university	2.1	3.1	9.2	54.8	30.8	4.09	0.838
Diversity management facilitates conflict management among employees in the university	7.2	7.9	14.4	45.6	25.0	3.73	1.135
Diversity management enhances employees perceptions and understanding of different cultures	2.1	6.5	11.3	48.3	31.8	4.01	0.938
Diversity management enhances understanding of diverse feelings of other employees in the University	3.1	5.8	13.4	49.7	27.7	3.93	0.961
Diversity management among employees promotes team work	2.4	4.1	15.8	47.3	30.5	3.99	0.919
Employees diversity management boosts employee participation in institutional activities	2.4	6.7	11.3	47.6	31.5	3.99	0.961
Employee diversity management enhances cooperation among employees	2.1	5.1	13.0	54.8	25.0	3.96	0.878
Employee diversity management encourages learning among employees	2.1	8.2	11.6	49.3	28.8	3.95	0.958
Employee diversity management builds loyalty and trust among employees	3.1	7.5	9.2	53.1	27.1	3.93	0.970

Stdev-Standard Deviation, SD-Strongly Dissagree, D-Disagree, NS-Not Sure, A-Agree and SA – Strongly Agree.

3.3 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is a process by which the researcher infers the result of sample data on the larger population based on a presupposition made prior to commencement of research Gujarati, (2003). This study performed hypothesis testing and determined the statistical significance of explanatory variables' coefficients, in verifying the null hypothesis by the use of the sample results. Multiple regression analysis was conducted and the results used to test the null hypothesis of the study from which objectives' conclusions were drawn. Significance level for testing the hypothesis was 5 percent.

H_0 : Diversity competence of employees has no statistically significant effect on employee performance in selected Public Universities.

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the significance of the Effect of employee diversity competency and employee performance. Table 5 shows the coefficient of determination R as 0.663, R^2 as 0.440 while adjusted R^2 as 0.438. The value of R is the correlation coefficient between the employee performance (Dependent variable) and employee diversity competency (Independent variable). Therefore the value of R of 0.663 implies that there is a positive and moderately strong correlation between employee performance and employee diversity competency. The value of adjusted R^2 indicates that 43.8 percent of the variation in employee performance is explained by the effect of diversity dimensions while 56.2 percent of the variation in the employee performance is explained by other factors that were not estimated in the model. From the results, it is concluded that there is a statistically significant and positive relationship between employee diversity competency and employee performance in Public Universities in Kenya. The findings concur with a study by Sucher and Cheung (2015) on the effect of employees' cross cultural competence on team performance in multinational hotels in Thailand. The study established a positive correlation between employee diversity competence and employee and team performance, which ultimately led to improved organizational effectiveness.

Table 5: Model summary of Employee Diversity competency and employees performance

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Change Statistics		
				R ² Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.663 ^a	.440	.438	.440	225.926	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Diversity Dimensions

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) shown in table 6, indicate that the model fit is appropriate for this data since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 further signifying a significant positive effect of employee diversity competency on employee performance. The results imply further that diversity competence of employees has no statistical and significant effect on the employee performance in selected Public Universities is rejected and alternative hypothesis that diversity competence of employees statistically and significantly influences employee performance in selected Public Universities is accepted.

Table 6: ANOVA of Employee Diversity competency

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	54.173	1	54.173	225.156	0.000 ^b
	Residual	69.057	288	0.240		
	Total	119.932	289			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Diversity competency

From the results in table 7, the fitted model ($Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1$) becomes:

$$Y = 1.225 + 0.685X_1$$

Where X_1 is the diversity competence of employees (Independent variable) regressed on employee performance (Y). The fitted model implies that a unit change in Employee Diversity competency leads to an increase in employee performance by a rate of 0.685 and that even if Employee Diversity competency were non-existent, employee performance would be at positive 1.225, meaning that there are other factors that have an effect on employee performance other than employee diversity competency.

Previous studies concur with the findings of this study. For instance, Hiranandani (2012) found that employees' diversity competence promotes diversity and employee performance by eliminating cultural insensitivity and discrimination. Johnson (2012) noted that organizations that do not have diversity competent employees are likely to experience problems with employee's relations, attitudes, and high employee turnover. According Lloyd and Hartel (2010) cultural competence significantly and positively affects individual assessment of and satisfaction with their diverse work teams. They further noted that competencies goal orientation, cognitive complexity, tolerance to ambiguity, dissimilarity openness, and emotion and conflict management skills are crucial in positively influencing employee's performance. Sucher and Cheung (2015) revealed that cross-cultural competence strengthened team performances resulting in improved organizational effectiveness while Tiraieyari (2009) noted that employees who were aware and accommodative of practices, traditions, and values of local clients were more effective in administering services than their counterparts.

Table 7: Coefficients of Employee Diversity competency

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.225	0.183		6.695	0.000
	Employee Diversity competency	0.685	0.046	0.663	15.031	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee performance.

IV. Discussions

The research objective was to evaluate the effect of diversity competence of employees on employee performance in selected Public Universities in Kenya. Employee Diversity Competency had eight dimensions; namely, awareness of one's culture, knowledge of other people's culture, openness towards other people's culture, openness towards cultural differences, negotiation skills, conflict management aspects, cognitive complexity, and emotional intelligence. Various analytical methods used to arrive at the findings included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis. The overall model revealed that there is a positive and relatively moderate correlation between employee performance and Employee Diversity Competency in Public Universities in Kenya of about 43 percent. This was as a result of the findings that most of the respondents agreed that Universities appreciate other people's culture; they are very open towards cultural differences in the university; diversity management facilitates conflict management among employees in the universities; diversity management enhances employees' perceptions and understanding of different cultures;

diversity management enhances understanding of diverse feelings of other employees in the Universities; diversity management among employees promotes team work; employees diversity management boosts employee participation in institutional activities; employee diversity management enhances cooperation among employees; employee diversity management encourages learning among employees; and employee diversity management builds loyalty and trust among employees

The study had hypothesised that diversity competence of employees has no statistically significant effect on employee performance in selected Public Universities. However, the results reveal that there exists a statistically significant effect of employees' diversity competence on employee performance. This lead to rejection of the null hypothesis that diversity competence of employees has no statistically significant effect on employee performance in selected Public Universities and thus alternative hypothesis that diversity competence of employees significantly influences employee performance is accepted.

V. Conclusion and Recommendation

From the findings of this study, it was evident that employee diversity competence greatly affects employee performance in Public Universities in Kenya. Therefore, Universities should appreciate other people's culture, be open towards cultural differences, facilitate conflict management amongst their employees, appreciates employees' perceptions and understanding of different cultures, understand diverse feelings of employees, promotes team work, boosts employee participation in institutional activities, encourages cooperation among employees, encourages learning among employees and builds loyalty and trust among employees.

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Asaneth C. Lagat. " The effect of diversity competence of employees on employee performance in selected Public Universities in Kenya." *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)*, Vol. 21, No. 11, 2019, pp 60-65.