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# Perceived Effects of Employee Training on Employee Performance at Machakos County Government, Kenya

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## Abstract

The objective of this study was to establish the perceived effects of employee training on employee performance at Machakos county government, Kenya. The significance of the study includes the benefits to the national government of Kenya, County governments in Kenya, members of the public and other researchers. A descriptive research design was used in this study. The target population was 1,300 employees of Machakos county government. Stratified random sampling technique was used because of the need to group the population into strata. The data collection instrument which was used is the questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed using a five point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they perceive employee training to affect their performance at the county government of Machakos. The questionnaire was administered through the drop and pick later method. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and the application of SPSS software. The findings revealed that employees perceive training to affect their performance at Machakos county government.

**Keywords:** Perception; Employee Performance; Employee Training.

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## **1. Introduction**

Peters and Waterson (2004) argue that performance is a critical factor in organizational success. An effective employee is a combination of a good skill set and a productive work environment. Peters and Waterson (2004) also indicate that in dealing with the concept of performance, perception becomes important because people's behaviour is based on their perception of what reality is, not on reality itself; the world as it is perceived is the world that is behaviourally important. Rotundo and Sackett (2002) state that companies can reap the rewards of providing training to their employees since well-trained workers can help improve productivity. Investing in employee training should improve worker retention rates and customer satisfaction. Training can also enhance morale on the job and loyalty to the company. According to Judge, Locke and Durham (2007), workers who believe that their company offers excellent training opportunities are generally less likely to leave their companies within a year of training compared to companies with poor training opportunities.

### **1.1. Discussion of the Key Words**

#### **1.1.1 Perception**

Perception is the organization, identification and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment (Banerjee, 1994). All perception involves signals in the nervous system, which in turn results from physical or chemical stimulation of the sense organs. Perception is sometimes described as the process of constructing mental representations of distal stimuli using the information available in proximal stimuli (Banerjee, 1994).

#### **1.1.2 Employee Performance**

Rotundo and Sackett (2002) view employee performance as the ability of an employee to perform effectively in his job and it requires that he understands and has a complete and up-to-date job description for his position and that he understands the job performance requirements and standards that he is expected to meet. Judge, Locke and Durham (2007) observe that sometimes an employee's performance will not be consistent with the requirements of the position. In such a situation training is recommended.

#### **1.1.3 Employee Training**

According to Jackson (2007), training is a process through which individuals are assisted to learn a skill or a technique. The scholar argues that training affects employee performance in an organization and that a successful training depends upon a systematic approach involving a careful needs assessment, solid program design and thorough evaluation of results. Through a study Bernardin (2007) concludes that training programs should not be designed as quick fixes for every organizational problem. Instead training should be designed to meet particular needs of the organization and its employees.

### **1.2 Research Objective**

The objective of this study is to establish the perceived effects of employee training on employee performance at Machakos county government, Kenya.

### **1.3 Value of the Study**

Information from the study could be used by the county government of Machakos and other county governments in Kenya to understand the perceived effects of employee training on employee performance in the devolved system. The county governments could also find the study useful in developing employee

training policies to improve employee performance. Researchers who may want to carry out similar studies or related studies in future may equally review this study to gain more insight.

## **2. Literature Review**

Graham and Bennet (2008) view training has an important function of utilization and motivation of organizational employees. Bernardin (2007) says that training is a systematic, intentional process of developing specific skills and influencing behaviour of organizational members such that their resultant behaviour contributes to organizational effectiveness. Bernardin (2007) continues to define training as any attempt to improve employee performance on a currently held job or one related to it. He submits that training has been viewed positively by employees and about two-thirds of employees, regardless of age and gender, view training as important in employee performance.

Grant (2002) is of the view that capacities of employees are a function of how effectively firms build and utilize their stocks of explicit and tacit knowledge. According to him, training programmes are intended to develop knowledge based performance capacities. Grant (2002) equally says that training helps employees understand what they actually experience and see at workplace. If employees understand what they experience and see at workplace they are likely to be more productive than when they do not understand what they see and experience at work. According to Spender (1996) the management of knowledge requires both the development and deployment of a firm's stock of knowledge. Firms stock of knowledge includes both explicit and tacit knowledge (Luis, David & Robert, 2004).

Luis, David and Robert (2004) explains that explicit knowledge is knowledge that can be readily observed and thus codified, shared, and controlled by the organization. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, is derived from experience and is largely unobservable except as the result of its application. Kinicki and Williams (2008) indicates that when organizations are hiring they always try to get people whose qualifications match the requirements of the job. Quite often, however, there are gaps in what the employees need to know and what they know. These gaps are filled by training. Kinicki and Williams (2008) suggest that training can either be on-the-job (internal) training which is carried out within the organization setting or off-the-job (external) training where employees receive training outside the organization premises.

Grant (2002) holds that training is an overwhelming important productive resource. According to him, the value of people lies primarily in the fact that they embody knowledge. Grant (2002) makes the case that the management of knowledge through training is largely one of the ways through which organizations are able to learn and adapt more quickly than competitors. Chruden (1998) declares training to be important in building up an individual up to a satisfactory level and passing knowledge and skills necessary for effective employee performance. He views training as investing in people to enable them perform better and to empower them to make the best use of their natural abilities. Rousseau (2001) indicates that employees receive training from schools, colleges, universities and on-job training. He agrees that Staff training improves employee performance by equipping them with knowledge and skills necessary to perform their work.

Baldwin and Peters (2001) demonstrated that innovative firms are more likely to support training activities than non-innovative firms, but the former have a preference for on-the-job training. Innovative firms particularly favour acquiring experience in the context of learning by doing to enhance the ability of employees to innovate and solve problems. Chowhan (2005) concluded that the existence and intensity of training activities in a firm depend on the level of technological competency that exists in that firm.

Leckie (2001) observes that small businesses provide their employees with less training than larger businesses.

According to Betcherman, Leckie and Davidman (1998), there are a number of studies which indicate that employee training has a positive impact on corporate performance. The scholars generally test the hypothesis that, by improving the competency of employees, training also improves the employees' perceptions, which is reflected in an improvement in the firm's performance. Betcherman, Leckie and Davidman (1998) concluded that firms that have training programs tended to perform better in terms of productivity, revenues, profitability, viability and prospects than their competitors.

### **2.1 Theoretical Foundation of the Study**

The study is grounded on the attribution theory. Weiner (1985) of the University of California at Los Angeles developed a comprehensive and extensive model of human attributions. Weiner's model is particularly informative in research on students learning in school settings. In his model, Weiner outlined the processes through which learners form causal beliefs (Weiner, 1985). Weiner (1985) observes that when an achievement-related event occurs such as a student fails an examination especially if the outcome was unexpected, the learner will undertake an attributional search, trying to understand what happened. Weiner (1985) indicates that the perceived cause of the event is important regardless of any other objective explanation because whatever a learner perceives as being the cause of the event will affect their future motivation toward engagement with similar tasks. Weiner (1985) gives an example of a group of students who performs poorly on an examination because of poor instruction. Those individuals who attribute their failure to poor teaching will have a different level of motivation in subsequent examinations than those who attribute their failure to their own lack of innate ability.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This section presents a detailed description of the methodology that was used in the study. It describes the research design, target population, sample design, data collection and data analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Ogula (2005) describes a research design as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation to obtain answers to research questions. A descriptive research design was used in this study. Descriptive research design is used to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied.

#### **3.2 Target Population**

According to Ogula (2005), a population refers to any group of institutions, people or objects that have common characteristics. Borg and Gall (2003) define population as the complete collection to be studied. The target population was 1,300 employees of Machakos county government.

#### **3.3 Sample Design**

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) argue that a sample size of 10% to 30% of the target population is a good representation. A sample size of 10% (130 respondents) was used to ensure that the sample size is manageable. Stratified random sampling procedure was used by grouping the employees into their respective ministries and then randomly selecting respondents from the ministries.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

The researcher used primary data which was collected using a questionnaire developed to address the research objective. Owens (2002) says that a questionnaire has the potential to reach out to a large number of respondents within a short time. The questionnaire was developed using a five point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they perceive training to affect their performance at Machakos county government. A scale of 1 to 5 was used with: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The questionnaire was administered through the drop and pick later method.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

According to Williamson (1999), data analysis is the process of packaging the collected data and putting it in order so that the findings can be easily communicated. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used in the analysis. The analysis sought to meet the research objective.

## **4. Results of the Study**

The results obtained from data analysis revealed that employees at Machakos county government perceive training to affect their performance with; 47%, strongly agreeing that they perceive training to affect their performance, 40% agreed that they perceive training to affect their performance while 10% neither agreed nor disagreed. The minority, 3%, disagreed that they perceive training to affect their performance. The mean was 4.3 out of possible 5 on a Likert scale.

### **4.1 Discussion of the Results**

The study sought to establish the perceived effects of employee training on employee performance at Machakos county government, Kenya. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they perceive training to affect their performance at Machakos county government, Kenya. The results show that employees from the county government perceive training to affect their performance with a mean of 4.3 out of possible 5 in a Likert scale and a standard deviation of 0.61513. Bernadin (2007) cites a study by William Cooke from Michigan State University conducted in 2007 with a sample of 888 employees across eight automotive supplier firms which lend credence to the perception that employee training affects employee performance. Training implies investing in people to enable them perform better and to empower them to make the best use of their natural abilities. When employees learn they improve their performance.

## **5. Conclusion**

The findings lead to the conclusion that employee training is perceived to affect employee performance at Machakos county government, Kenya. Training is associated with higher levels of employee performance while lack of employee training leads to lower levels of employee performance. The researcher recommends that employee performance could be improved by the organization providing more training opportunities to the staff. The researcher equally suggests that similar studies could be conducted to evaluate the perceived effects of employee motivation, performance appraisals and compensation on employee performance at Machakos county government, Kenya.

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