

Influence of Alternative Work Discipline Interventions on Employee Productivity in the County Government of Meru

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Abstract

Governments around the world devolve or decentralize power with the sole aim of bringing services closer to their citizens. However, the realization of quality services by citizens is hampered by employee productivity which is in turn affected by a multiplicity of work environment factors in these devolved units of governance. A major factor that affects employee productivity is work environment discipline created in these devolved or decentralized governance units. This mainly in terms of how indiscipline cases are handled and or whether there is an official reliable structure to address them. This research study specifically investigated the influence of alternative work discipline interventions on employee productivity in the county government of Meru. The investigation was based on reinforcement and behavior modification theory. The study was guided by descriptive survey research design. Target population comprised of 490 staff from the department of revenue, water and irrigation and health services. The sample size comprised of 216 staff from selected departments of county government of Meru chosen to participate in the research. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the final sampled subjects. Questionnaire was used to collect primary data in the study locale. Collected data was analyzed quantitatively using measures of central tendency and variability; means and standard deviation. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 22.0 enabling the study to carry out inferential statistics that made it possible to make decisions on the studies hypotheses. Analyzed data was presented in frequency, percentage tables. The response rate of the study was 82.41%. The study established a positive and significant relationship between the alternative work disciplines interventions and employee

productivity. Thus the null hypothesis in the study was rejected. The study concluded that alternative work discipline interventions on employee productivity in the county government of Meru was vital for employee productivity in the organization. The study recommends that alternative work disciplines interventions should be incorporated in the public sector for smooth change management strategies transition hence ensuring continued improvement of employees productivity.

Keywords: Alternative Work Discipline Interventions, Employee Productivity, County Government.

Introduction

Work environment discipline is defined as the standard and or impartial procedure of carrying out disciplinary action or punishment to junior employees for violations of rules and job processes (Brett, Atwater and Waldman, 2005). It entails the enforcement of management to bolster institutional guidelines. This also involves demanding of a penalty against an employee or member of staff that fails to meet standards set within an organization. Employee productivity at county government level on the other hand entails the ratio between the output that is services rendered to citizens and the input that it funds and materials invested by the devolved units (Haenisch, 2012).

Alternative work discipline interventions are vital in creating positive progress within the organization, although failure to do capacity building to employees, the strategy is likely to backfire. Joy-Ann (2017) indicates that the organization needs to decentralize the power of making certain decisions to ensure effective change management strategies are incorporated. The senior managers being unapproachable by the junior employees, brings out the element of control and command within system of delegation. This hampers diversity and inclusive culture hence affecting the employee productivity.

Since the inception of the Meru county government after the 2013 general elections, the county has made a number of strides in delivering on its agenda. However, existing alternative work discipline interventions are among the number of challenges that have frustrated delivery of this agenda (Department of Lands, Economic and Physical Planning, 2013). According to Zaberio and Keiyoro (2017) health grants are not utilized in the Meru county due to existing corruption influencing the health care projects at the devolved governance level. In the study, 65.6% of the respondents agreed on the need on performance appraisal and evaluations to enhance provision of health care services. The situation is also exacerbated by failure to employ discipline management strategies that are not deemed unfair by employees as well as lack of strategically communicating on existing discipline guidelines or recommended procedures to employees of the county government of Meru. Additionally, given that indiscipline is inevitable, dire consequences coupled with failure to employ alternative interventions such as; guidance and counseling, training and or dispute resolution to address minor disciplinary issues. These has resulted to low numbers of the public participating in Meru county government's planning process, substandard service delivery and untimely completion of projects. The study also concludes that benchmarking is important learning tool for medical personnel improve the quality of standards in service delivery to the Meru county citizens.

Hosni, Ridzwana, Amalina and Zaidi (2017) notes that alternative work discipline interventions might not be necessary for organizations when the employees are not cooperative. It affects the financial productivity of organization, due to work environment instability in local governments as compared to the national government. Different organizational culture has

varying scales on approval towards change management strategies. According to findings of the study, 70% change management programs did not succeed in meeting the threshold set due to employee resistance and lack of management support. In the case of enough resources invested in change management only 30% are likely to stick to change. The main aim of alternative work discipline interventions in an organization is to improve performance by maximizing the impact on employee productivity positively. Development planning and specifically that which is participatory is the key to realization of county government's goals.

Statement of the Problem

One of the main aspirations of devolution of power in Kenya that created county governments was to enhance the effective delivery of public services that was to be realized through productive civil servants (Ministry of Devolution and Planning, 2013). However, employee productivity in county governments in terms of revenue raised, quality of services rendered to citizenry, enhanced public participation in planning processes and timely projects implementation has been hampered by issues related to work environment discipline (Lucy & Joanes, 2017). This is significantly caused by how cases of indiscipline are handled. Further, this occurring despite the existence of both Article 234 (2) (b) of the constitution of Kenya and the discipline public service manual of 2016 that provide guidelines on how to strategically manage indiscipline cases.

County governments employees experience changes after every financial and election year. This is due to approved budgets and new management after new leaders are sworn in. Mass retrenchment in the county government of Meru brings about implementation of change management strategies in the organization. This move was meant to reduce wage bill and improve services. Workers with vague and indefinite contracts were part of those targeted by the new move too. There is need for implementation of change management strategies in the county government to prepare employees adopt to new structures (Zaberio and Keiyoro, 2017).

Different scholars have investigated on change management on employee productivity in various organizations. In Solomon Island, Asante, Roberts and Hall (2011) found that non-existence of a fair change management strategies characterized by lack of provision of incentives presented a significant negative influence on employee productivity among Human Resources for Health (HRH) in provincial governments. In Kenya, Lucy and Joanes (2017) established the need for change management in the local governments and argued it's likely to affect the employee productivity. Service delivery to the public should be participative and the general public involved in the public participation at the initial stage of decision making. Hence, the study investigated influence of alternative work discipline interventions on employee productivity in the county government of Meru. Therefore, this study sought to fill this research gap.

Research objective

The objective of this study was to establish the influence of alternative work discipline interventions on employee productivity in the county government of Meru.

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of alternative work discipline interventions on employee productivity in the county government of Meru.

Scope of the study

The scope of the study was on three (3) departments in the Meru county government. Research study's respondents were; staff at the revenue board, department of water and irrigation and department of health services. Meru county was the study locale.

Literature Review

Reinforcement and Behavior Modification Theory

Formulated by Skinner (1963) the reinforcement and behavior modification theory is guided by the premise that all behavior is determined by either reinforcing and or reprimanding stimuli. Additionally, Skinner (1963) observed in understanding employees behaviors it is imperative that organization's leaders note that the type of reinforcement (positive or negative) they settle on and approaches to modification of behavior determines employee productivity. Further, he contends that positive reinforcement is a strategy that assists in evoking as well as enhancing new behaviors increasing rewards and incentives rather than excluding benefits. Behaviour modification therefore employs planned or slated technique that rewards required behaviors and reprimands unacceptable behavior (Skinner, 1963).

Schneier, Pernick and Bryant Jr, (1979) proponents of the theory also observed in order to enhance productivity of public service employees their administrators should adopt the use of positive reinforcement and behavior modification techniques. Additionally, they argued through these employees in the public service are inspired to perform better as it is within their knowledge that in the event that they display acceptable behavior they will be rewarded (Schneier, et al., 1979). Rembor (1983) another proponent of the Reinforcement and Behavior Modification theory posits that the modification of behavior is utilized by organizations to negate dwelling on the internal grounds resulting to certain behavior. Further, he contends that it also furnishes management with reliable ways of selecting approaches for developing, varying and controlling organizational behavior with respect to the achievement of set objectives (Rembor, 1983).

The theory therefore facilitates the researcher in making an argument that the prevailing work environment discipline in the county government in terms of disciplinary interventions and procedures determines its employees' productivity. Additionally, the theory is linked to the study to make a case that to enhance employee productivity in a county government, there is need to adopt positive reinforcement in the form of alternative work discipline interventions which constitutes; counseling sessions, dispute resolution mechanisms, trainings through mentorship and coaching and job rotation. Further, the theory is adopted to the study to a make case that improving the work environment discipline through modification of behavior in terms of observing recommended work discipline procedures by for example investigating indiscipline cases and complying with process of suspension enhances employees' productivity.

Empirical Review

Alternative work discipline interventions and employee productivity in the county government

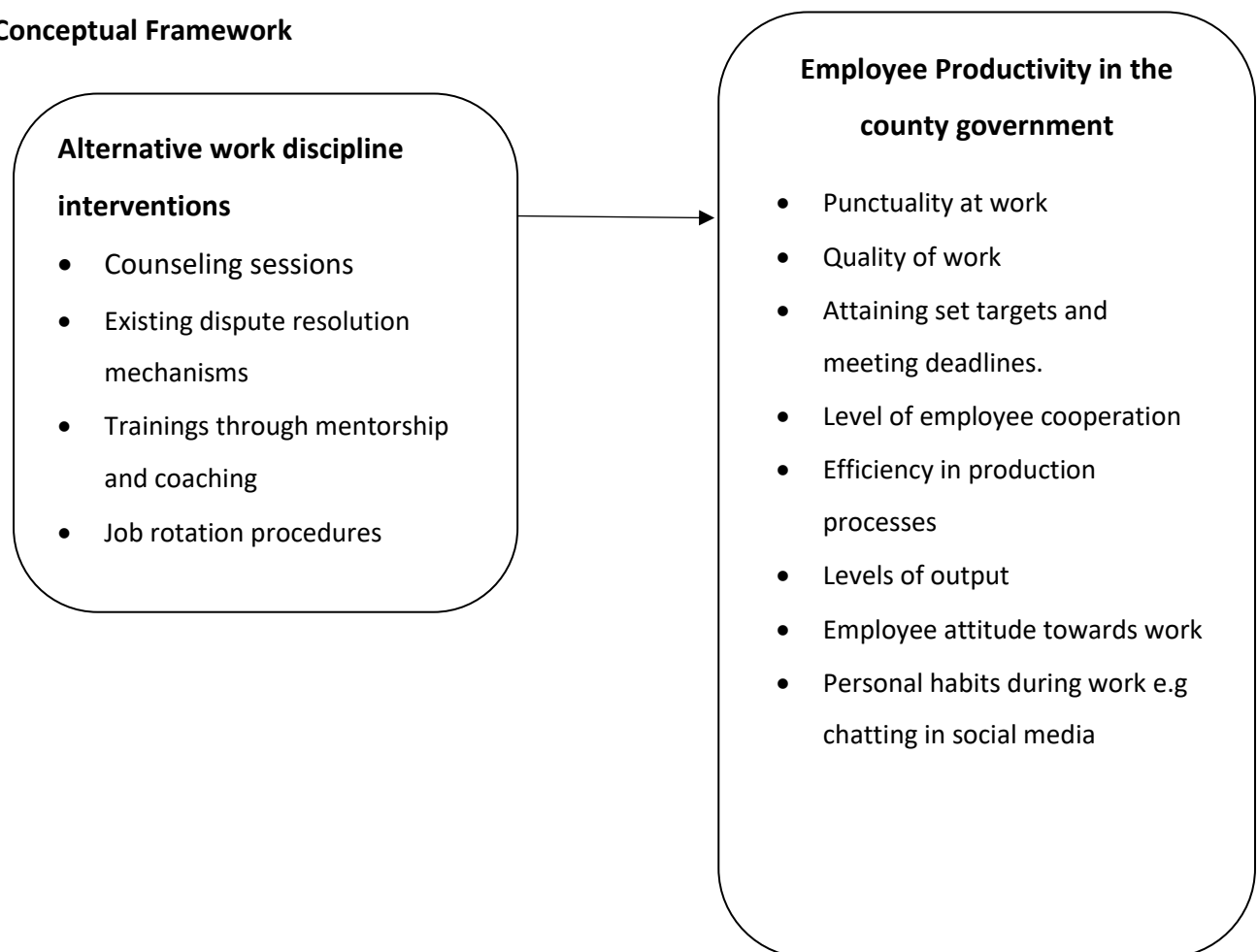
According to Moerland (1995) alternative work discipline interventions entail programs put in place by an employer to attend to employee smooth transition to change management making use of strategy other than convectional disciplinary action. This includes; counseling sessions, the establishment of a dispute resolution mechanism and training through coaching, job rotation procedures, and mentorship (Moerland, 1995). Chebet (2015) carried out a

research on determinants of employees' performance in the county governments of Kenya using a sample of 375 employees, observed that corrective discipline guided by alternative work discipline interventions significantly influenced employee productivity in a county government in Kenya. Additionally, making use of descriptive survey research design she notes that the adoption of a dispute resolution mechanism, training through mentorship and coaching all guided by the discipline manual for the public service positively affected employee productivity in terms of quality of services delivered to citizens and number of county projects completed. Analysis also indicated that 61.7% of the employees agreed that their supervisors were approachable and hence making the working environment harmonious for learning and employee development.

De Waal (2010) did a study on achieving high performance in the public sector and what needs to be done using a sample of 189 employees and a longitudinal design in provincial governments in Netherlands. The results highlighted failure to employ strategic human resources management (SHRM) practices such as training through mentorship and coaching and counseling for indiscipline provincial governments employees. This he further noted was in terms of revenues raised and quality of services delivered to citizens. The study concluded the non-existence of alternative work discipline interventions had a negative effect on employee productivity.

This study argument was based on influence of alternative work discipline interventions on employee productivity.

Conceptual Framework



The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This is informed by advantages of the descriptive survey research design accrued to the researcher; as it provides opportunities to gather information on prevailing conditions of individuals and also an accurate illustration of activities, objects and processes in their natural occurrence. Descriptive survey research design enables the researcher to gather both quantitative and qualitative data and establish a relationship between study variables in relation to influence of change management strategies on employee productivity in the study locale (Sekaran & Bougei, 2010).

The target population of this study was the staff at the revenue board, department of water and irrigation and department of health services of county government of Meru. The choice of these respondents is informed by the fact that they are permanent and pensionable and thus attract retirement benefits. The target population was limited to those in administrative and management positions and also empowered to make decisions concerning project implementations. This therefore rules out employees on contract and casuals. The choice of these respondents is informed by the expectation that they are familiar with the variables under study and therefore were in a position to provide the necessary data required.

The sample size was arrived at by applying Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) theory of sampling that suggests when the population is less than 10,000 then 10% - 30% of the total population is considered adequate for descriptive survey research. The accessible population for this study is 490. Subsequently, for this investigation Mugenda and Mugenda's formula was used.

$$nf = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{n}{N}}$$

According to the formula:

nf= desired sample size when the population is less than 10,000

n= desired sample size when the population is more than 10,000

N= estimate of the population size.

Using the formula the study's sample size is:

$$\begin{aligned} nf &= \frac{384}{1 + \frac{384}{490}} \\ nf &= 1 + \frac{384}{490} \\ 384/490 &= 0.78 \\ 1+0.78 &= 1.78 \\ 384/1.78 &= 215.7 \\ &= 216 \end{aligned}$$

A questionnaire was used to collect primary data. This research study's questionnaire incorporates both closed and open ended questions. On data analysis, a multiple regression model was employed to determine the relationship between alternative work discipline interventions and employee productivity.

The regression model is presented as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Employee Productivity

β_0 = Constant Term

β_1 = Beta coefficient

X_1 = Alternative work discipline interventions

Research Findings And Discussion

Majority of the respondents 59.6% strongly agreed existing dispute resolution mechanisms was most preferred strategy under alternative work discipline interventions and it influenced employee productivity, second was job rotation procedures 57.9% then counseling sessions 47.2% and trainings through mentorship and coaching 46.6%. There is need for the county government to strengthen and improve on employees training through mentorship and coaching.

Table 1

Alternative Work Discipline Interventions

Items	SA %	A %	N %	D %	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Counselling sessions as a form of alternative work discipline interventions influences employee productivity in county government.	47.2	47.2	5.1	0.6	4.41	0.62	-0.7	0.28
Existence of dispute resolution mechanisms as a form of alternative work discipline interventions does influence employee productivity in county government.	59.6	34.8	3.4	2.2	4.52	0.67	-1.5	2.68
Trainings through mentorship and coaching as a form of alternative work discipline interventions influences employee productivity in county government.	41.6	46.6	11.2	0.6	4.29	0.68	-0.6	-0.3
Job rotation procedures as a form of alternative work discipline interventions influences employee productivity in county government.	57.9	33.1	9.0	0	4.49	0.66	-0.9	-0.3

KEY: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.
Cronbach Alpha =0.806

The findings of this study is supported by the work of Kudo (2015) and that of Idris (2018) who established a positive and significant relationship between employee productivity and alternative working conditions. This implies that the organization has to offer counselling and mentorship to its employees to ensure that they are more focused on the organizational goals and activities. Employee trainings are supposed to be directed towards ensuring employees not only acquire the relevant skills but also understand the disciplinary actions that may befall

them if they don't observe the organization rules and regulations. This calls for the adoption of a grievance resolution mechanism that is not more management controlled.

Regression Analysis of Alternative Work Discipline Intervention and Employee Productivity

Results in table 2a, 2b, 2c below shows the amount of variation on the dependent variable explained by the independent variable. The results of regression analysis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.303$, $p < 0.000$) between alternative work discipline interventions and employee productivity. This means that increase in the use of alternative work discipline intervention in the county government will lead to increase in employee productivity. The independent variable reported R value of 0.340 and $R^2 = 0.115$ which means that 11.5% of corresponding variations in employee productivity can be explained by alternative work discipline interventions. The rest of the variation 88.5 % could be explained by other variables included in the model.

The model is $Y = 2.944 + 0.303$ (alternative work discipline interventions).

Where Y = Employee productivity

The F test gave a value of $F(1,176) = 22.952$, $p < 0.001$ which is relatively large enough to support the goodness of fit model explaining the variations in the dependent variable. This validates that alternative work discipline interventions as a useful predictor of employee productivity. The results of regression analysis revealed there was significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.303$, $p < 0.000$) between alternative work discipline intervention and employee productivity. This implies that employees who experience higher levels of alternative work discipline interventions tend to have higher productivity. Hence the null hypothesis of the study is rejected which states that there is no significance influence of alternative work discipline interventions on employee productivity in county government of Meru.

Table 2a

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.340 ^a	.115	.110	.34364

a. Predictors: (Constant), Alternative Work Discipline Interventions

Table 2b

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.710	1	2.710	22.952	.000 ^b
	Residual	20.784	176	.118		
	Total	23.494	177			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Productivity

Table 2c

Regression Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Standard Error	Beta	T	

1	(Constant)	2.944	.282		10.455	.000
	Alternative					
	Work					
	Discipline	.303	.063	.340	4.791	.000
	Intervention					

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Productivity

Summary, Conclusion And Recommendations

The findings of the correlation analysis indicated that there was a significant and positive relationship between alternative work disciplines interventions and employee productivity ($r=0.340$, $p<0.01$). This implies that considering alternative work disciplines interventions aspects such as coaching and mentoring, counseling and dispute resolution mechanisms, employees in the county government improve productivity. This is supported by Kudo (2015) who found and established that the presence of alternative work disciplines interventions like mentorship and coaching tended to increase employees productivity in a manufacturing organization. In order for devolution to function as expected, discipline of employees really matter. Employees determine the expectations set by the county government in ensuring that the stated goals are achieved. Hence employees discipline reflects on their productivity. The county government of Meru visions and missions can be achieved if the company can improve their employees' working performance and also improve on discipline to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of delegation of duties and output. This is also supported by the work of Idris (2018) who found that the implementation of counselling and training of employees in organizations contributed to improved employees performance.

Existence of a dispute resolution mechanism was most preferred method of solving disputes within the organization, followed by use of job rotation procedures. Having alternative discipline mechanisms rather than the vertical oriented ones that inhibits the participation of the employees is good for the improvement of the employee productivity. This is due to the fact that the employees are offered avenues in which those issues that affect them are resolved (Munyolo, Chege & Muluka, 2015). Training and job rotations provided the right and conducive environment for employees growth hence incorporating the change management strategies positively. Alternative work discipline interventions also allow provision of better interaction opportunities between the employees and management. Many democracies worldwide, including Kenya have in recent years adopted devolution as a system of decentralization for development. Devolution is the statutory granting of powers from the central government of a sovereign state to a government at a subnational level, such as a regional, local, or state level. It is a form of decentralization. Devolution in Kenya is established by Chapter 11 of the Constitution of Kenya. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 upon promulgation and enactment changed the Governance structure from a centralized unit to devolved sub-units known as the County Governments. These findings concur with those of Wood, Saundry and Latreille (2017) who established that existence of alternative work discipline influenced employee productivity in British work places.

Decentralization of power enables swift decision making and interactive structures hence need for work discipline interventions in work place to ensure a smooth work environment for the employees. These study findings are similar to those of Kudo (2015) who established through a survey that introduction of counseling, mentorship and coaching to undisciplined local government employees resulted to increased employee productivity.

Conclusion

Existence of alternative work discipline interventions positively affected employee productivity, hence disciplinary guidelines on change transition in the organization enables employees to avoid resistance and conflicts. Work environment determines time adaptability of employees to changes in the organization and this should be gradual and systematic. Counseling sessions are important in settling disputes and conflicts within the organizations, counseling also brings about mental stability of employees in the organization; acts as therapy. Training through mentorship and coaching is vital for the impartation of knowledge and skills to the employees, such that they are equipped with the right skills to perform their jobs. This definitely improves their capability and improves their productivity. Standards on the performance of duties should be streamlined and the county human resource manual should be implemented. Revision of the human resource manual to be in tandem with the changes brought by technology and more demanding citizens who know their rights hence formation of disciplinary committees that are more democratic and inclusive.

Recommendations

Alternative works discipline intervention should be implemented in the public sector. This ensures that conflicts between employees and management are resolved without causing undue pain to either of the parties. The organization need to purpose and work towards solving minor mechanisms that may not be stipulated within the human resource management manual to offer clear guidelines to the employees. The alternative work disciplines interventions should be embedded or work closely with the formal discipline channels to ensure that the employees are closely involved in the disciplinary actions undertaken as insiders rather than outsiders.

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