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EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP CHANGE ON THE PERFORMANCE OF HEALTH WORKERS IN NYAMIRA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract: *This study aims to explore the impact of change management practices on the performance of health workers within the Department of Health Services in Nyamira County Government, Kenya. The study employs a descriptive case study methodology rooted in human capital and change management theories. A total of 235 health practitioners seconded to the County Government during the devolution of healthcare in 2015 were enrolled in the study. The results indicated that the respondents agreed that communication channels influence employee performance among public care institutions Kenya. Regression analysis was employed to identify the extent to which independent variables such as leadership change predict variations in employee performance. The findings derived from the regression analysis contribute valuable insights to the overarching research objectives, informing not only the academic discourse on change management in the health sector but also providing practical implications for enhancing health worker performance in the realm of public health. Recognizing the importance of effective leadership change provides actionable insights for organizational leaders seeking to optimize health service delivery and cultivate a positive work environment within the department of health services.*

Keywords: *change management practices, leadership change, health workers*

Introduction

Employee performance is measure of how well a worker attains or exceeds the organizational performance targets. Better organizational performance is a concern of all managers; therefore, they focus on employee performance because it results in the desired organizational outcomes. Ho (2008) and Tseng and Lee (2014) emphasize that organizations should put in place a performance metrics to give managers and staff insights on what is required to be done to attain organizational goals. People are crucial in the performance management process, as per the human capital theory. They offer their abilities, skills, knowledge, and experiences to the business (Boxall, 1996; Armstrong, 2006). In concurrence, Anitha (2014) asserts that people unique because they cannot be copied by rivals with a value when managed well because they can bring forth more returns.

Organizational prosperity relies on the ability of those in management to objectively evaluate the performance of employees against the targets, compile reports, communicate to employees about their performance and recommend for remedial actions to correct deviations (Crowther and Aras, 2008). In this case, there is emphasis on implementation of proper models of performance. Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) argue that future studies should focus on developing performance models which can applied universally. Cardy (2004) indicates that

individual and organizational performance are dependent on using suitable change management strategies such as adoption of suitable organizational culture that emphasizes on results, good communication channels and supportive leadership styles.

Employees are the most valuable asset in any organization; without them, goals and objectives cannot be met (Bello, 2012). Leadership efficiency plays a key role in ensuring a company sustain good performance. Leaders determine the quality of recruitment, selection, development, deployment and reward of organizational resources, as well as the conversion of these resources into goods and services that are useful and the delivery of value to the company as important decision-makers (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015). Therefore, leaders provide managerial input that is vital in giving an organization a sustainable competitive advantage (Adler, 2001).

Effective leadership, according to Hurduzeu (2015), entails motivation, management, inspiration, compensation, and analytical abilities. To enhance employee performance, leaders in companies create an enabling environment to stimulate creativity and innovation. Besides, it increases the participation of employees by allowing them to question issues that they are not comfortable with. Scholars and researchers also believe that the function of leadership/leadership is critical when managing companies or dealing with change management issues (Asghar, 2010).

A number of researches have indicated that there is a relationship between organizational leadership and good performance at both the individual and organizational levels. In most organizational scenarios, transformational leadership behaviors positively associate with subordinate performance than transactional behaviors, based on evidence from a number of comparative studies (Brockhaus, 2006).

Bello (2012) investigated the idea of ethical leadership, the qualities of an ethical leader, the influence of ethical leadership on employee job performance, and how companies produce leaders who are not only sound in character but also sound in behavior. The study concluded that corporate leaders must establish a solid work culture, the businesses should aim to employ ethical individuals, and that corporate leaders should reward ethical behavior and penalize unethical behavior based on empirical literature.

In Pakistan, Abbas & Yaqoob (2009) studied the influence of leadership development on employee performance. Coaching, training and development, empowerment, involvement, and delegating were all variables included in this research on leadership development. According to the study, the cumulative effect of these characteristics had a 50% impact on performance of employees. However, additional variables like attitude, dedication, motivating factors, and confidence with the company, as well as remuneration, incentive, and bonuses, account for the remaining 50% of the contribution to employee performance.

Problem statement

Despite extensive global, regional, and local studies on change management, there remains a notable gap in research specific to county government contexts. Existing research, exemplified by Rukunga (2003) and Ongaro (2004), predominantly focuses on multinational corporations and national parastatals, leaving a void in understanding change management practices' effects on health workers within county governments. This gap is particularly evident in Nyamira County, where public health institutions are grappling with numerous challenges following the devolution of the Ministry of Health in 2015 (Nyamira County Health Annual Report 2015).

Against this backdrop, the research problem addressed in this study is the effectiveness of change management practices in influencing the performance of health workers within the Department of Health Services in Nyamira County Government, Kenya. The neglect of employee considerations during organizational change can lead to a lack of willingness to adopt new practices, affecting individual and organizational performance. This study seeks to examine the impact of change management practices on health worker performance in the unique context of Nyamira County, where public health institutions are grappling with challenges following the devolution of the Ministry of Health in 2015 (Nyamira County Health Annual Report 2015). By exploring this uncharted territory, the research aims to fill a critical gap in understanding and contribute valuable insights to inform tailored change strategies for optimizing health worker performance in county government contexts.

This study, thus, aims to address the dearth of research in Nyamira county government context and specifically explore the effects of change management practices on the performance of health workers in Nyamira County. By delving into this uncharted territory, the research seeks to uncover insights that can inform effective change strategies tailored to the unique challenges faced by health workers in the county, ultimately contributing to enhanced organizational and individual performance in the realm of public health.

Study objectives

The study's general objective was to establish the effects of change management practices in Kenya with a specific objective to establish the effect of leadership change on the performance of health workers in Nyamira County.

The study hypothesis is;

H₀₁: Leadership change has no significant relationship with performance of health workers in Nyamira County

Significance of the study

Notably, the significance of this research extends across academic, practical, and policy-oriented domains, offering valuable contributions to the field of change management practices in the Department of Health Services in Nyamira County Government, Kenya. From an academic perspective, this study aims to enrich the theoretical foundations of change management. By exploring the intermediary connections between change management practices and health worker performance, the research seeks to add nuanced insights to the existing literature. In a broader context, while numerous studies have delved into change management globally and within corporate settings, the scarcity of research within county governments necessitates a focused examination. This study, situated in the unique context of Nyamira County, provides empirical evidence that not only contributes to academic discourse but also offers an opportunity for comparative analysis with existing research.

On a practical level, the findings of this research hold immense relevance for health administrators and policymakers in Nyamira County. The insights garnered from understanding the impact of leadership change, organizational culture, and communication channels on health worker performance can inform strategic decision-making processes.

Study Area

The research was conducted in Nyamira County; one of Kenya's forty-seven counties, and it is located in the Gusii Highlands in the country's south western region. It is located between 00 30' and 00 45' South latitude and 340 45' and 350 00' East longitude. It is bordered on the north by Homa-Bay, on the west by Kisii, on the south by Bomet, and on the east by Kericho. The county has a population of 598,252 people living in 131, 039 homes (KNBS, 2010) in an area of 899.4km² (MODP, 2013) according to the Kenya National Population and Housing Census of 2008/09. Administratively, the county is comprised of four constituencies namely West Mugirango, North Mugirango, Borabu and Kitutu Masaba. It has 20 wards, 33 locations and 88 sub locations. Agriculture is the major economic activity with tea being the major cash crop. The county headquarters is located in Nyamira town.

Research methodology

Employing a descriptive case study methodology rooted in human capital and change management theories, the research aimed to comprehensively analyze the impact of leadership change, organizational culture, and communication channels on the performance of health workers. The study, conducted among 630 health practitioners seconded to the Nyamira County Government during the devolution of healthcare, utilized a purposive sampling technique to evenly represent 235 respondents across various cadres. Data was gathered through questionnaires, and the instrument's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Quantitative data analysis involved SPSS and Microsoft Excel, with results presented through statistical approaches like tables, bar graphs, and pie charts.

Research Findings

Measurement of Variables

Prior to establishing effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable, there was a need to measure each construct or variable. The following sections explain the measurement of each construct or variable alongside the findings.

Employee Performance

Employee performance was the dependent variable. The assessment of employee performance in this study utilizes a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very great extent), to evaluate specific aspects of job performance. The chosen statements encompass work deadlines, problem identification and solution, ability to work without supervision, willingness to consult when necessary, and a subjective self-assessment of job performance. Work deadlines measure the promptness and efficiency of task completion, while problem identification and solution gauge the employee's proficiency in addressing workplace challenges. The item on working without supervision assesses autonomy and self-reliance, while the willingness to consult when necessary reflects collaboration skills. Finally, a subjective response on job performance allows employees to provide a self-assessment. The 5-point Likert scale is chosen for its balanced response options, enabling nuanced distinctions and efficient data analysis. Overall, this scale ensures a comprehensive evaluation of diverse dimensions of employee performance in a structured and quantitative manner.

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which different statements apply to them. The responses obtained are summarized in the following table 1:

Table 1: Employee Performance

Employee Performance	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Work deadlines	7%	19%	12%	22%	40%	3.665	1.364
Problem identification and solution	7%	15%	8%	43%	27%	3.671	1.218
Work without supervision	1%	3%	9%	48%	39%	4.217	0.78
Consult when necessary	0%	1%	17%	63%	19%	3.994	0.637
Response on job performance	3%	8%	10%	48%	31%	3.969	0.996

NB: 1 = not at all; 2 = small extent; 3 = moderately; 4 = great extent; 5 = very great extent; M = mean; and SD = standard deviation

From the study within the department of health, work deadlines are met at 40% of respondent as the best means of meeting performance, working under minimal supervision was the second most preferred means of achieving performance with a percentage of 39%, as compared to giving response to job performance which was 31%, consulting with supervisors and co-workers with 27%. According to responses from the Health Care works, meeting work deadlines advocates for meeting the organizational goals and objectives which in return improves performance. The average mean of the responses indicated from the results was 3.903 which show that the respondents agreed that communication channels influence employee performance among public care institutions Kenya. The standard deviation was 1.000 which indicated that the answers received were varied as they were dispersed far from the mean.

Leadership Change

The evaluation of leadership change in this study employs a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very great extent), to measure specific leadership attributes. The selected statements include assessing whether the leader creates a sense of urgency, forms a guiding coalition, provides evidence-based information, selects the right individuals for change management roles, establishes a clear and achievable vision for change, constructs effective strategies to realize the vision, recruits, promotes, and develops individuals to champion change, and addresses systems hindering the change vision. The Likert scale's versatility is evident in capturing nuanced distinctions and facilitating efficient data analysis. The scale ensures a structured and quantitative assessment of diverse dimensions of leadership change, offering a comprehensive understanding of the leader's effectiveness in steering organizational transformation.

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which different statements apply to them. The responses obtained are summarized in the following table 2:

Table 2: Leadership change

	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Creates a sense of urgency	6%	37%	3%	32%	22%	3.924	1.244
Guiding coalition	40%	13%	22%	12%	13%	2.405	1.865
Provides people with facts, figures and evidence.	14%	11%	9%	34%	32%	3.596	1.403
Selects the right people for the role of change management and development	6%	16%	6%	26%	48%	3.944	1.291
Creates clear and achievable vision for change	4%	16%	7%	42%	30%	3.783	1.171
Constructs effective strategies to deliver the vision	2%	5%	9%	41%	43%	4.186	0.93
Recruits, promotes and develops the right people to promote change	28%	33%	6%	14%	19%	3.015	1.542
Changes systems that get on the way of change vision	1%	5%	21%	50%	23%	3.876	0.857
Average						3.58	1.288

NB: 1 = not at all; 2 = small extent; 3 = moderately; 4 = great extent; 5 = very great extent; M = mean; and SD = standard deviation

Promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 marked a momentous point in the country’s history. Notably, the Constitution provided for a major devolution not only of resources and functions, but also creating a whole new layer of county government. This was devoid from systems changes, which faced obstacles especially from the Health Care service providers. Given the obstacles noted, leadership plays a critical role in change management which include, employee resistance, and communication breakdown and employee turnover among others. One of the steps to effective change management is to increase sense of urgency for transition, from the table 4.7, 10% felt that the County Health Department Management has not created a sense of urgency to reinforce the need for change at all leading to delays. 90% felt that leadership to some extent has tried to priorities urgency in change. The respondents cited that creation of timelines for various policy changes, frequent support supervision and health systems changes such as creation of Sub-County Management Teams among others has eased their transitions.

From table 2, Formation of Guiding Team scored a mean of 2.405 with 40% saying that guiding coalition doesn’t work well for them because of anticipated conflict of interest. Respondents cited that Multi-Disciplinary Teams and various Steering committees that have been formed most of them remain non-functional or operate sub-optimally. The respondents applauded the Directors efforts in terms of ensuring that they get the latest policy documents, health legislations and most importantly the constitution as far as Health Devolution is concerned. This is through periodic review reports, Circulars and Publications.

Through both the National Government and County Government, efforts have been made to ensure fully operational County Public Service Board to ensure that right people are recruited according to the constitution. 94 % supported to some extent and above that the County has tried to ensure that right people are chosen to management level. 6% disagree, citing political influence playing a role in Management selection. From the department of healths vision which states that “A healthy and productive county with equitable access to

quality health care” was also a subject of discussion among the respondents. The responses were that the vision is clear and achievable through health systems strengthening, with a mean of 3.583. For the vision to be achieved effectively and efficiently, county health strategic and investment framework must be sound and clearly formulated.

Correlation Analysis

Linearity test was done using correlation analysis. Results in table 3 below indicate linear relationship between the independent variable. The results suggested that there exists a positive relationship between leadership change, organizational culture and communication channel.

Table 3: Correlation analysis among variables

		Employee Performance	Leadership change
Employee Performance	r	1	.389**
	p		0.000
	N	161	161
Leadership change	r	.389**	1
	p	0.000	
	N	161	161

NB: r = Pearson Correlation; p = Sig. (2-tailed)

The correlation analysis presented in Table 3 indicates a significant positive correlation between employee performance and leadership change ($r = 0.389$, $p = 0.000$). This finding aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the impact of leadership on employee performance. Transformational leadership, in particular, has been associated with higher performance at the group and organizational levels (Kim & Park, 2020). The study by Kim & Park (2020) highlights the direct effects of transformational leadership on organizational climate, knowledge-sharing, and organizational learning, indicating the influential role of leadership in shaping organizational dynamics.

Furthermore, the study by Wu (2018) emphasizes the influence of paternalistic leadership on employee innovation behavior, underscoring the significance of leadership styles in driving employee performance and organizational outcomes (Wu, 2018). Additionally, the research by Eisenbach et al. (1999) stresses the criticality of charisma, individualized development, and intellectual stimulation in leaders faced with demands for renewal and change, further emphasizing the role of leadership in organizational change and performance.

Moreover, the mediating role of organizational culture in the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational effectiveness has been highlighted in the study by (Shirini & Xenikou, 2022), indicating the complex interplay between leadership, culture, and performance outcomes. Additionally, the study by Rizka et al. (2022) suggests that transformational leadership influences readiness to change, further emphasizing the multifaceted impact of leadership on employee attitudes and performance.

The findings from these references collectively support the correlation analysis, highlighting the multifaceted influence of leadership styles, organizational dynamics, and employee attitudes on performance outcomes. The positive correlation between employee performance and leadership change underscores the pivotal role of leadership in shaping organizational performance and employee outcomes.

Regression Analysis

In this study, regression analysis was employed as a robust statistical method to investigate the relationships and dependencies among key variables. Specifically, regression analysis was utilized to explore the potential predictors of employee performance within the context of change management practices in the Department of Health Services in Nyamira County Government. By employing regression models, the study aimed to identify the extent to which independent variables such as leadership change predict variations in employee performance.

The regression analysis enabled a quantitative examination of the impact of various factors on the dependent variable, employee performance, offering a deeper understanding of the nuanced dynamics at play. Through this statistical technique, the study sought to unveil the individual and collective contributions of the selected variables, shedding light on which aspects of change management practices significantly influence or predict variations in employee performance. The findings derived from the regression analysis contribute valuable insights to the overarching research objectives, informing not only the academic discourse on change management in the health sector but also providing practical implications for enhancing the performance of health workers in Nyamira County Government.

The regression results are provided below;

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Predictor variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	2.777	0.680		4.085	0.000
Leadership change	0.442	0.096	0.545	4.588	0.000

From the regression findings, the substitution of the equation becomes:

$$Y = 2.777 + 0.442 X_1$$

In this case, Y is the organization performance X₁ is Leadership Change.

To achieve the study objectives, the study tested different sets of hypotheses.

Leadership change and Employee Performance

The set of hypotheses include:

H₀₁: Leadership change has no significant relationship with the performance of health workers in Nyamira County.

H_{A1}: Leadership change has a significant relationship with the performance of health workers in Nyamira County.

Beginning with the hypothesis, H₀₁ posited that leadership change has no significant relationship with health worker performance in Nyamira County. However, the regression analysis yielded compelling evidence to the contrary. The beta coefficient of 0.096 and a highly significant p-value of 0.000 led to the rejection of the null

hypothesis. This indicates that leadership change plays a substantial role in influencing health worker performance positively. The positive beta coefficient underscores that an increase in leadership change correlates with a modest but noteworthy enhancement in health worker performance.

The hypothesis, H01, set out to examine the relationship between leadership change and health worker performance in Nyamira County. The subsequent regression analysis provided noteworthy findings that significantly deviate from the initial assumption. Contrary to the null hypothesis, the evidence presented a compelling case for the positive and significant impact of leadership change on health worker performance.

The beta coefficient of 0.096 represents the slope of the relationship between leadership change and health worker performance. In this context, the positive beta coefficient implies that an increase in leadership change corresponds to a positive and modest increase in health worker performance. This suggests that periods of transition in leadership within the Department of Health Services in Nyamira County are associated with tangible improvements in how health workers carry out their responsibilities.

The critical aspect of this finding lies in the highly significant p-value of 0.000, which is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05. The small p-value indicates strong evidence against the null hypothesis, providing robust support for the assertion that leadership change has a substantial impact on health worker performance. The rejection of the null hypothesis implies that leadership change is a statistically significant predictor of positive variations in health worker performance.

The modest but noteworthy enhancement suggested by the beta coefficient underscores the practical significance of leadership change. While the increase may not be dramatic, the observed positive association implies that changes in leadership contribute positively to the overall effectiveness of health workers in Nyamira County. This finding aligns with the broader literature on organizational change and leadership, emphasizing the pivotal role that effective leadership plays in shaping employee performance and organizational outcomes.

In practical terms, this result suggests that strategic initiatives aimed at fostering effective leadership change within the Department of Health Services could yield tangible benefits in terms of health worker performance. Such initiatives might include leadership development programs, mentorship opportunities, and transparent communication during leadership transitions. Understanding and leveraging the positive impact of leadership change can be instrumental in optimizing health service delivery and promoting a positive organizational culture within Nyamira County's health sector. The findings of this study concurred with study by Asbari, 2015 which showed that there exists a positive and significant effect on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. Also, another conclusion from the study by Sinega, Asmawi, Madhakomala and Suratman (2018) concurred with the conclusion of this study by establishing that transformational leadership is in most cases directly influencing employee performance.

Summary of Findings

The results show leadership change had a significant effect on performance of health workers ($\beta = 0.442$; $p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected at 95% confidence level. In rejecting the null hypothesis, conclusions are made that leadership change has a significant effect on performance of health workers. The investigation into the impact of leadership change on health worker performance in Nyamira County revealed compelling findings. The study aimed to assess whether leadership transitions within the Department of Health

Services significantly influenced the effectiveness of health workers. Contrary to the initial hypothesis (H01) that posited no significant relationship, the regression analysis produced a highly significant p-value of 0.000, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

The positive beta coefficient of 0.096 indicated that an increase in leadership change was associated with a modest yet noteworthy enhancement in health worker performance. This implies that periods of transition in leadership positively influence how health workers carry out their responsibilities. These findings underscore the pivotal role of effective leadership change in shaping health worker effectiveness within the Nyamira County health sector. Strategically fostering leadership transitions could, therefore, yield tangible benefits in terms of optimizing health service delivery and promoting a positive organizational culture.

The findings from the analysis of leadership change and health worker performance in Nyamira County lead to several important conclusions. Firstly, the rejection of the null hypothesis suggests that leadership change significantly influences the effectiveness of health workers in the Department of Health Services. The positive beta coefficient indicates that an increase in leadership change correlates with a modest yet meaningful enhancement in health worker performance. These conclusions imply that strategic efforts to foster effective leadership change within the Nyamira County health sector can result in tangible benefits. Initiatives such as leadership development programs, transparent communication during transitions, and mentorship opportunities can contribute to the positive impact observed in health worker effectiveness. Recognizing the importance of leadership change provides actionable insights for organizational leaders seeking to optimize health service delivery and cultivate a positive work environment within the Department of Health Services.

Scope for Future Research

The researcher suggested that this study be replicated in other organizations in order to verify its findings and allow for generalization of the findings. In addition, the researcher suggested that future study should emphasize on additional change management techniques that affect organizational performance than leadership, culture and communication. The current study sheds light on critical aspects of change management practices, organizational culture, and communication channels within the context of health worker performance in Nyamira County. However, further exploration is warranted to delve into the intricacies of these relationships and uncover additional factors that may influence health worker effectiveness. Future research endeavors could extend the investigation to consider the role of specific leadership styles in tandem with change management practices, providing a more nuanced understanding of their combined impact.

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