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## ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTS OF SUPERVISOR SUPPORT ON EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION: A CASE OF KENYA POWER AND LIGHTING COMPANY, MOUNT KENYA REGION.

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### ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was on supervisor support, the independent variable and employee job satisfaction as the dependent variable. Its main objective was to assess the effects of supervisor support on employee job satisfaction by sampling employees of Kenya Power and Lighting Company, Mount Kenya region. The study was directed by the following primary objectives; to examine the effects social support has on employee satisfaction, to examine the effects of task assistance on employee job satisfaction, to investigate the effects of communication style on employee job satisfaction and to investigate the effect of worker recognition on employee job satisfaction. The researcher implemented a descriptive design to conduct the research. Close ended questionnaires were administered and interviews conducted to the research respondents in order collected primary data from a sample of 302 respondents from the population group of 1227 employees of the Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) Mount Kenya. The findings revealed that social support, task assistance, communication style and employee recognition jointly possess a considerably positive effect on employee job satisfaction. The research results from both correlation ( $r=0.794$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and regression analysis ( $F= 2.392$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ) confirmed that supervisor support possesses statistically significant effect on job satisfaction. The research adds knowledge to the understating of the connection amid supervisor support and job satisfaction by confirming the findings of preceding researchers that a significant link exists amid supervisor support and job satisfaction (Qureshi & Hamid, 2017) and also filling the existing gap by establishing the effect that supervisor support has on employee satisfaction. Focusing on these findings the researcher recommended the organization to focus on supervision support not only as a tool of managing the performance of employees but also as a supportive means of supporting its employees who are key asset and crucial in the pursuit of the organizational goals.

### KeyWords

Employee Engagement, Employee Recognition, Job Satisfaction, Social Support, Task Assistance

## Introduction

Employee satisfaction is the degree of an employee's contentedness with their job and his/her readiness to perform optimally (Hoffman-Miller, 2013). It is people's feeling towards their jobs and its diverse features. It is the people's degree of fondness or indifference to their employment (Spector P. E., 1997). It is an intricate as well as a vital notion for human resource managers to understand. Job satisfaction enhances management with a variety of information concerning the job, their employee and work environment. This information facilitates an organization in making of decisions and rectifying the path of organizational policies and behavior, it further acts as an analytical tool for employee's problems in order to effect the necessary changes with minimal opposition. It also reinforces the organization's communication system and management at the same time facilitates in directing its employees' needs in terms of their professional development and organizational development in general. Central to the management of the human resources of an organization is central (George & Jones, 2008).

According to Rhoades & Einseberger, (2002), supervisor support is the behavior of the supervisor that aids their junior exhibit their abilities; know how, as well as attitudes starting right from the inducting program. The immediate supervisor plays an important role of linking the employees to the senior management. This role is performed when the immediate supervisor passes across information on organizational goals and values and advocates for the employee. Supportive supervision as a process involves helping staff to continually improve on their work performance. Dissatisfied employees are most probably going to distance themselves from the goals and vision of their organization, which encourages absenteeism or resignation from their work among these employees. Contrastingly, engaged employees remain proud of their job, maintain organizational goals and they are also reluctant to change their job (Carnegie, 2012). Supervisors are the closest people to the employees in an organization charged with the responsibility of managing them. Supervisors are therefore central to ensuring that employees are satisfied. Satisfied employees have reduced turnover intentions, are more engaged with their work and are more productive and offer quality services (Young, 2004).

Enhancement of employees' satisfaction in addition to their opinions on supervisor support lead to increase in their dedication to the firm and their willingness to leave the firm dwindles (Buonocore & Russo, 2013). A strong relationship exists between the support that an employee receives from their supervisor and job satisfaction hence supervision positively influences job satisfaction (Wachira, 2009; Oluoch, 2007 and Onzere, 2011).

## Literature Review

### i. Supervisor Support and Worker Satisfaction

Supervision is a practice by which one member of staff is tasked by the organization to work over the other workforce so as to achieve the defined organizational, expert and individual objectives which collectively promotes the best outcomes for customers (Morrison, 2005). The immediate supervisor plays an important role of linking the employees to the senior management. This role is performed when the immediate supervisor passes across information on organizational goals and values and advocates for the employee. Supportive supervision as a process involves helping staff to continually improve on their work performance. Dissatisfied employees are most probably going to distance themselves from the goals and vision of their organization, which encourages absenteeism or resignation from their work among these employees. Contrastingly, engaged employees remain proud of their job, maintain organizational goals and they are also reluctant to change their job (Carnegie, 2012). According to Smith & Shields (2013), perceived supervisor support (PSS) is a measure of noticeable qualities and the apparent supportive behaviors under the broad concept of supervisor experiences. Employee's constructive views of supervisor support boost their level of job satisfaction. Supportive supervisors offer more task guidance especially to new employees, give feedback to encourage and help employees improve on their performance and set clear goals and develop their staff by continuous training to maintain high levels of engagement and satisfaction (Carnegie, 2012).

## **ii. Social Support and Job Satisfaction**

Social support is the opinion or reality that one is minded of and has the necessary help they need extended to them from other people, and also strongly predicts worker satisfaction. Relating to a work setting, social support refers to a set of interpersonal relations that form a casual social net which provide convenient backing and intelligence together with empathy (Etzion, 1984). Social support is characterized by; the opinions that there are enough people around an individual to whom one can rely on in times of need and the level of gratification associated with the support offered to an individual (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983). It is related to increased employee welfare both directly and indirectly. Support in the workplace is beneficial to employees as it promotes their well-being by dropping work associated negative results such as worker dissatisfaction (Kula & Guler, 2014). Supervisors are a strong source of social support (Kula & Guler, 2014) and this source is strongly related to employee job satisfaction (Piennar, Sieberhagen, & Mostert, 2007). Social support by the supervisor involves employee's perceptions that they have access to a supervisor who offers a helping relationship with resources including emotional empathy, interpersonal interaction and tangible assistance (Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fischer, 1999). Workers with higher retention rates are associated with supervisors who pay attention to them as they share about job challenges, offer sympathetic statements and also connect with their emotional needs. A positive link exists between an employee's opinions on the value of the supervisor-subordinates affiliation and their gratification with their job. Consequently, this result to a sensation of competency, personal accomplishment and employee satisfaction (Kansas Workforce Initiative , 2010). Social support has the potential of creating a sense of belonging to employees at an emotional level (Sundin, Bildt, Lisspers, Hochwalder, & Setterkubd, 2006) and strongly connected to job satisfaction especially when it remains affiliated to the supervisor (Kula & Guler, 2014). Emotional demands affect all service employees who work on long-term customer relations and depend on the training received by the employee on customer relations. It concludes that support extended to them by their colleagues is a valuable resource and that the workers who receive social support exhibit intensified feelings of job satisfaction (Roxana, 2013) .

## **iii. Task Assistance and Job Satisfaction**

Supervisor support often aims at monitoring employee's performance towards goals and regular follow up with employees to ascertain that new tasks are being correctly implemented (World Health Organization, 2008). Managing supervision in a task-centered manner enables delivery of particular outcomes of an organization. A new worker may be in doubt of the objectives to pursue or the course to take to accomplish those objectives; the employee is prone to be contented with a superior or any coworkers who can assist clarify those objectives and courses. The role of ensuring that employee' autonomy over tasks and decisions making by a supervisor in an institution, has a straightforward influence on employees' emotional welfare and personal development (Kula & Guler, 2014). Low rate of turnover intention by the employee is linked to supervisors who provide substantial and professional counsel, instructions and guidance in duties related to work, maintain training actions, coach staff at the same time provide solutions to difficulties associated with work (Kansas Workforce Initiative , 2010).

## **iv. Communication Style and Job Satisfaction**

Communication refers to sending and receiving of information between two or more people (Yaffe, 2011). Supervisor-employee communication at the workplace influences worker satisfaction significantly. Nonverbal immediacy that is, being warm and open to communication, by the supervisor contributes to enhancing their one-on-one interactions with the juniors, controlling job satisfaction in an encouraging way. How a supervisor communicates to/with his/her subordinates is supreme to the verbal content (Yaffe, 2011). A superior who embraces nonverbal immediacy, warmth as well as open to communication has a higher likelihood of receiving positive reaction from their juniors while the one who is not only distant to their juniors but also unwilling to communicate will obviously get unenthusiastic feedback from their subordinates in the workplace (Richmond, McCroskey, & Johnson, 2003; Mishra A. , 2013). Communication that is open and honest between supervisor

and the employee enhances understanding of job expectations and performance. Supervisors who communicate effectively and respects and trusts the employees generate the highest levels of engagement (Carnegie, 2012).

#### **v. Employee Recognition and Job Satisfaction**

Employee recognition refers to granting an employee a particular status in an organization. It depicts how employees are evaluated and the gratitude they receive in return from the institution. It spells out the manner in which an organization rewards and gives status to their employees for their work and activities (Danish & Usman, 2010). Increasing the responsibilities of an employee and giving them the decision-making authority over their responsibilities, coupled with beneficial feedback from the supervisor, boosts their self-esteem and loyalty towards the institution. This therefore boosts the well-being of the worker as well as the performance of the organization (Kula & Guler, 2014).

When the supervisor recognizes employee's contribution to the organization, encourages them by giving constructive feedback on their performance enhances their self-confidence, commitment and productivity. Failing to acknowledge and reward employees' efforts, impacts negatively on their drive and productivity. Supportive supervisor will ensure the employee is engaged by recognizing their abilities (Carnegie, 2012). Employee recognition leads to job satisfaction by instilling positive attitude in workforce steering them to be creative in order better serve their clients and employers (Mutia & Sikalieh, 2013),.

#### **vi. Theoretical Literature Review**

Edwin A. Locke's Range of Affect Theory advanced by Edwin A. Locke in 1976, establishes job satisfaction as the existing difference between what employees expects to get from their job and the actual emoluments they receive from it. It states that the extent to which an employee values a given feature of their work such as supervision or job autonomy moderates their job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction once they are met or not. It maintains that attitudes towards one's job influences their sense of gratification with it, and workers' satisfaction with their job results from supportive relations with people and their surroundings. Worker's job satisfaction is produced when their relationship with the supervisor is bigger than the amount of value that the employee puts on the results of the interaction. While on the other hand, workers' dissatisfaction with their job is produced when the relations are worse than anticipated outcome of the interaction. The theory proposes that supervision is an aspect that employees appreciate and that it influences employee job satisfaction as it is an environmental factor (Locke E. A., 1976). Value of the Immediate Supervisor Model as advanced by Carnegie, introduces the association that exists amid supervisor support and worker satisfaction by recognizing that former is an impetus of the latter. Carnegie carried out a nationwide research on employee satisfaction in the place of work, from which he established that among the several aspects that influence employee satisfaction, the delicate relationship connecting supervisors and employees is dominant. The study revealed that supervisor support is perceived as a compassionate leadership in terms of, the supervisor's value for, actions towards and the social support they offer their subordinates; and feedback on performance in terms of, the style of communication adopted by the supervisor and constructive response feedback they give their subordinates on their performance). The model contributed to this field of study by identifying the supportive behavior of the supervisor which influences job satisfaction either in a straightforward or incidental manner. The function of supportive supervisors enhances employee engagement (Carnegie, 2012).

#### **vii. Conceptual Framework**

The framework outlined in the figure below, consists of the dependent variable; job satisfaction which was predicted by employee engagement and decreased turnover intentions; and independent variables which included social support, task assistance, communication style and employee recognition.

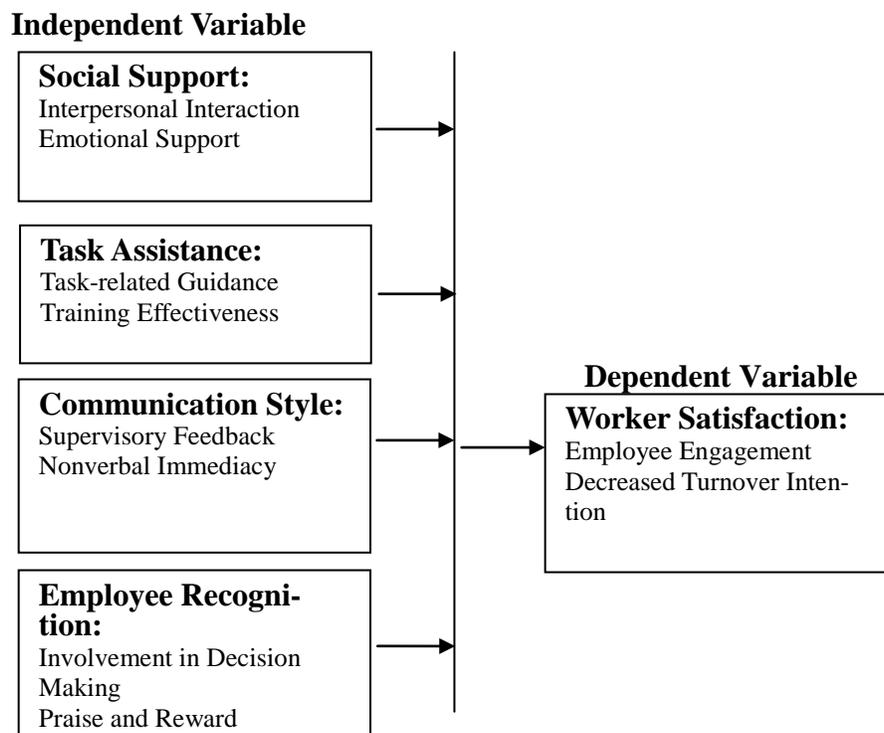


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework  
 Source: Researcher, 2020

## Methodology

Structured questionnaires and guided interviews were utilized to gather first-hand information. The structured questionnaire was broken down into two sections with section one collecting demographic data and section two collecting data that will link job satisfaction and supervisor support. It adopted a 5-point Likert scale. The interview guide was designed for the county business managers across KPLC, Mount Kenya Region. This is because they are the top managers in each KPLC office within the region thus adequately knowledgeable on supervision matters within the company. These instruments gathered data which mainly was the opinions and perceptions of the respondents on the different attributes of social support, task assistance, communication style and employee recognition and how these attributes affect job satisfaction. A sum of 302 questionnaires was distributed among the sample obtained from the study's entire population. From the 302 questionnaires that were circulated, 213 of them were completed and returned which translated to 70.5% rate of response while out of the 10 scheduled interview guides distributed, 6 were successfully held translating to a response rate of 60%.

## Findings

The collected data was evaluated by descriptive statistical functions such as frequencies, standard deviation, mean and percentage, while inferential statistical functions including Pearson's correlations and multiple regression. The researcher used Cronbach's Alpha to determine self-consistency of the questionnaire as major research instrument of the study. Nearer to 1 the coefficient is, the more consistent items are on a scale. When Cronbach's Alpha result is 0.7 it is acceptable. Based on the test of Cronbach's alpha results illustrated in table I, the questionnaire was reliable as a research instrument as all variables has acceptable reliability coefficients.

**Table I Reliability Statistics**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	.947	.948	4
<b>Social Support</b>	.892	.892	4
<b>Task Assistance</b>	.924	.925	4
<b>Communication Style</b>	.952	.952	3
<b>Employee Recognition</b>	.959	.964	4

**i. Descriptive Analysis**

Descriptive analysis was on descriptive information on gender, age, educational attainment, years in employment and managerial levels of the research respondents. The majority were males at a rate of 72.3% while females were at a rate of 27.7%. Most respondents were aged between 31-40 years at 31.9%, at 29.6% were between the ages of 41-50 years, followed by those aged 20-30 years at 22.5% while the least were aged 51-60 years at 16%. Diploma holders were the majority at 47.4%, certificate holders came in second at 33.8%, and bachelor's degree holders were at 14.1%, while master's degree holders were the least at 4.7%. There was no respondent participating in the study with a doctorate degree. Most of the respondents had been for more than 10 years at 62.4%, followed between 6-9 years at 16% and then 2-5 years at 15.5% respectively. The least had worked for 1 year or less at 6.1%. 55.4% were junior level employees, mid-level employees at 39% while senior-level employees were at 5.6%.

**Table II Descriptive Data Results**

Gender	Rate of recurrence	Proportion (%)
Male	154	72.3%
Female	59	27.7%
Total	213	100%
<b>Age(in years)</b>	Rate of recurrence	Proportion (%)
20-30	48	22.5%
31-40	68	31.9%
41-50	63	29.6%
51-60	34	16%
Total	213	100%
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	Rate of recurrence	Proportion (%)
Certificate	72	33.8%
Diploma	101	47.4%
Bachelors	30	14.1%
Masters	10	4.7%
Doctorate	0	0%
Total	213	100%
<b>Number of Years</b>	Rate of recurrence	Proportion (%)
0-1	13	6.1%
2-5	33	15.5%
6-9	34	16%
10 years and above	133	62.4%
Total	213	100%
<b>Managerial level</b>	Rate of recurrence	Proportion (%)
Junior Level	118	55.4%
Mid-Level	83	39%
Senior Level	12	5.6%
Total	213	100%

## ii. Inferential Analysis

The investigator examined the effects of social support on employee satisfaction using Pearson correlation as well as multiple regression, the findings were as shown in tables III and IV respectively.

**Table III: Pearson Correlation Coefficient Matrix of the Predictor Variables**

Variables		Supervisor Support	Employee Satisfaction
Supervisor Support	Pearson Correlation	1	.791**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	213	213
Employee Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.791	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	213	213

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Researcher, 2020

From the findings presented in Table 4.17, a sturdy affirmative correlation was noted among supervisor support and employee satisfaction with ( $r=0.794$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Further, the respondents were asked on whether the supervision is considered central to managing the employees effectively in the organization. 73% of the respondents felt that supervision is key to managing the employees in the organization while 23% of the respondents felt that it was not. It can therefore be concluded, founding on the above findings that support from the supervisor support is correlated to worker satisfaction.

**Table IV: All Variable's Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.706	0.621	0.617	1.5		
ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4	.243	.208	2.392	0.001
	Residual	208	.529	.254		
	Total	212	.296			
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Co-efficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	.239	.202		.543	.050
	Social Support	.491	.037		2.643	.000
	Task Assistance	.242	.122		1.982	.004
	Communication Style	.164	.113		1.447	.014
	Employee Recognition	.092	.106		0.878	.038

**Predictors: (Constant), Social Support, Task Assistance, Communication Style, Employee Recognition**  
**Dependant Variable: Employee Job Satisfaction**

Source: Researcher, 2020

Table IV demonstrates that there is a direct association between the two major variables under study, that is, supervisor support as well as employee satisfaction. The effect that supervisor support has on worker satisfaction is significant ( $F= 2.392$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ). The results ( $R\text{ square}=0.621$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) indicate that supervisor support explained 62.1% of change in job satisfaction.

Using the above findings the regression equation is fitted as follows:

$$Y=0.239+0.491X_1+ 0.242X_2+0.164X_3+0.093X_4 + 0.202 \quad P=0.05$$

When the four variables that consist supervisor support (social support, task assistance, communication style and employee recognition) are held constant, employee job satisfaction will be 0.239. Holding other factors constant, a unit increase in social support will cause 0.491 scale up in employee satisfaction ( $p=0.000$ ), increase in a unit of task assistance triggers 0.242 scale up in employee satisfaction ( $p=0.004$ ), increase in a unit of communication style generates 0.164 scale up in job satisfaction ( $p=0.014$ ) while increase in a unit of triggers to 0.092 scale up in worker satisfaction ( $p=0.038$ ). The analysis on the four aspects of supervisor support pointed out towards it having a significant affirmative effect on worker satisfaction.

## Discussion

It was established in this research that support from the supervisor majorly affected worker satisfaction in regards to social support, task assistance and the recognition that the supervisors accord to employees as well as the style adopted in communication. This finding is aligned to the findings of (Qureshi & Hamid, 2017) that support from the supervisor is substantial in increasing worker satisfaction. Objective one sought to assess the effects of social support on job satisfaction. Kind of support which supervisors offer their juniors may be in terms of instrumental, emotional and also the support during and post the training period. The finding concur with (Carnegie, 2012) who maintained that supportive supervisors offer more task guidance to new employees, give feedback, set clear goals and develop their staff by continuous training to maintain high levels of engagement and satisfaction (Carnegie, 2012). The findings illustrates that employees in KPLC feel valued in their place of work and willing to recommend people for employment and consider spending the rest of their careers there. This reflects that the degree of engagement of employees is high and that they have low turnover intentions.

The investigator examined consequences of social support on worker satisfaction within objective one; its finding was that 21.2% of the alteration in worker satisfaction was elucidated by variation in social support. Basing on the research outcomes, social support was confirmed as having a positive effect on worker satisfaction since a strong statistical significance was noted on the effects of support from supervisor and worker satisfaction. The mentioned findings were corresponding to (Kula & Guler, 2014; and Piennar, Sieberhagen, & Mostert, 2007) that social support offered by the superiors is closely associated to worker satisfaction. Social support from the supervisor translates to fairness in the workplace and willingness to help in unusual circumstances. This finding is in agreement with (Zhang, Lin, & Wan, 2015) that social support is crucial for predicting job satisfaction through enhancing quality of work life.

The effect that task assistance has over employee satisfaction was examined within objective number two; its finding was that 25.4% of the alteration in employee satisfaction was explained by variation in task assistance. From these findings, it was confirmed that task assistance has a favorable effect on job satisfaction since a statistical significance was noted on the effects of task assistance and employee job satisfaction. These finding concur with (Kansas Workforce Initiative , 2010) that low rates of turnover intention by the employee is linked to supervisors who provide task assistance.

The implications of communication style upon employee job satisfaction was examined within third objective, its finding was that 20.9 % of change in job satisfaction was characterized by change in communication style. Supervisor should communicate frequently with their employees in an honest manner in order to facilitate performance improvement, feedback, opportunities for development and clear roles expectation for the

employees (CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, 2012). It was established, basing on findings, that a free and open communication style has beneficial effect on employee job satisfaction due to its statistical significance. Communication affects attitudes that employees have towards their job and reduce employee's insecurity in the place of work. The results from this study concur with previous findings that have established that communication has substantial effect on job satisfaction (Porkelsson, 2018, : Czech & Forward, 2014)

Effects that employee recognition has on worker satisfaction was examined within the fourth objective, its finding was that 15.1 % of change in job satisfaction was characterized by variation in employee recognition. These findings confirmed that employee recognition to have affirmative effect on worker satisfaction since a statistical significance was noted. These findings are aligned to those of (Mutia & Sikalieh, 2013) that employee recognition triggers employee job satisfaction.

The results of the study also established that job satisfaction levels among employees in Kenya Power are considerably high basing on the results of its indicators, that is, employee engagement and low turnover. The employees strongly agree to be willing to recommend a new employee to and like their job at KPLC. They also consider remaining at KPLC throughout their careers.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the research, the presence of a strong association linking supervisor support to worker satisfaction was confirmed. These findings thus support the notion that supervisor support is an essential aspect to attaining job satisfaction of workers. Apart from ensuring employees are recognized within the organization due to their performance, the other three attributes of supervision i.e: social support, task assistance and communication style have a strong influence at establishing a supportive supervisor-subordinate relationship in KPLC hence it having a favorable influence over worker satisfaction. This research established that employee recognition is not explicitly offered by the supervisors to their employees in the researched organization though the research findings found that employee recognition has an affirmative outcome on worker satisfaction generally. Therefore, it is essential for organizations to come up with different strategies for enabling employee explicitly aware they are recognized including word of praise by their supervisors following achievement of their tasks and goals.

The investigator concludes that for employees to be contented with their job, whose indicators include increased employee engagement and decreased turnover intentions, support from their superiors/supervisors is crucial. Supervisors play an integral part in managing employees in their day to day activities. Organizations should therefore ensure that its supervisors are supportive to their employees due to the positive impact that supportive supervisors have on job satisfaction. Workers are key asset of any organization, ensuring that have supportive supervisors will contribute to their job satisfaction while satisfied employees leads to improved performance in the organization and leading to attainment of its goals.

## **Acknowledgment**

My untold gratitude goes to my lovely mum, Catherine Kinanu Stanley, my dearest sister Irene Kanyua for your support, sacrifices and encouragements right through the course. I really am thankful my kin and folks my impenetrable backup system.

To the entire staff of Kenya Power and School of Business and Economics, all the respondents and my fellow classmates, thank you very much. You have been very resourceful and insightful during the entire period of this report writing.

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