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**EFFECTS OF EMPLOYEE COMPETENCIES ON EMPLOYEE JOB
PERFORMANCE IN HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS; A CASE STUDY OF
THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME, KENYA**

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Abstract

Employee performance has an effect on organizational performance. Therefore, every organization wants its employees to perform well. This study sought to investigate the effects of employee competencies on employee job performance in the World Food Programme, Kenya. Specifically, the study looked at the effect of leadership competencies, academic competencies, communication competencies and problem-solving competencies on employee job performance in World Food Programme, Kenya. The study was guided by Talent DNA Model theory, The Human Capital Theory and Model of Effective Job Performance Theory. The study employed a descriptive research design. The target population was 400 staff from which a sample of 196 was picked. The study applied stratified random sampling and simple random sampling methods in generating the sample. Primary data was used. The data was collected using self-administered questionnaires and analyzed using inferential statistics. The study adopted binomial logistic regression model to assess the effect of the independent variables on employee performance. From the findings of this study, possession of academic competencies is 3.202 times more likely to improve employee performance while having leadership competencies is 0.176 times less likely to improve employee performance. Communication competencies and problem-solving competencies will likely improve employee job performance 10.339 and 3.842 times over respectively. There is an overall significant positive effect of competencies on employee job performance at 50.2%. It was concluded that possession of leadership, academic, communication, and problem-solving competencies has a positive effect on employee job performance. Relative to the other three competencies examined in this study, having leadership competencies contributes least in improving employees job performance while possession of communication competencies contributed most.

Key words: *Competencies, job performance*

Introduction

The World Food Programme (WFP) is an agency of the United Nations system, and the largest humanitarian organization in the world. Every year, WFP assists 86.7 million people in around 83 countries. In Kenya, WFP provides refugees in Kenyan camps with food and nutrition assistance in form of cash and food transfers, partners with traders and retailers to minimize inefficiencies in food supply chains, supports county as well as national governments in seeing to it that respective nutrition action plans and safety nets are inclusive, and transfers effective and cost-efficient logistics services to humanitarian and development partners, and the government.

Increased competition among both domestic and international organizations, emergence of new markets, and increased global business transactions as witnessed over the past few decades have been associated with the need for comparative human resource management. According to Campion, Fink, Rugeberg, Carr, Phillips and Odman (2011), competitive advantage in any organization is got through retaining competent employees as the main resource. Selection of staff using the competency approach is based on classifying, identifying, and measuring individual differences for particular work-related constructs that contribute to successful job performance (Bartram, 2014). Cummings and Worley (2011) state that new knowledge, skills and behaviors are required from employees owing to frequent organizational changes. They argue that if employees don't gain new competencies, it will be difficult for organizations to implement changes. Mathis, Dan Jackson and John (2016) describe employee performance as what employees do or fail to do. Further, according to Sedarmayanti (2007), employee performance is the result of employee work through a management process or an organization as a whole whose work results can be shown, the evidence is concrete and can be measured. Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) and Rotundo and Sackett, (2002) suggest that employee performance indicators consist of, organizational citizenship behaviour, task performance, and counterproductive behavior.

Boyatzis (2008) defined competencies as an underlying characteristic of a person that could be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image, social role, or a body of knowledge which they use. Taylor (2017) provides yet another definition of competencies as a means of 'being able to perform a work role to a defined standard with reference to real working environments. Leadership, being about getting things done the right way, can be used to motivate employees. In order to achieve these goals, the leader must strive to gain the employees' trust and make them followers. To gain their trust and properly accomplish their tasks for the organization, the employees must be motivated (Baldoni, 2005). Both the employees and the leaders help one another to attain high levels of morality and motivation.

Organizational performance is deemed to be a sign of the capacity of an organization to efficiently achieve independent goals (Venkatraman & Ramanujam, 1986). One of the elements that can be assessed is performance of employees through the level of their productivity. Research studies have put forward various methods to evaluate organizational performance (Wong & Wong, 2007; Prajogo, 2007). Some of them are quantity, quality, knowledge and creativity of individual towards the finished tasks that are in accordance with the responsibility during a specified period. The systems used in assessment must have standard parameters that can be relied upon.

Job Stress is one of the factors associated with employee job performance. Job stress results from lack of proper coordination of resources and job demands with personal capabilities (French, 1975). It basically is a case where the job demand exceeds the capacity of an individual to satisfy the employer. Work stress has been known universally as a social problem (Mizuno et al., 2006) that bears a combination of factors which disrupt employees' physical and psychological wellbeing (Lu, 1997), as well as affect their health (Conway et al., 2008). This resonates with the studies that have been conducted on the effect of job stress in terms of medical matters that will lower job performance and increase the rate of absence and job displacement (McVicar, 2003; Mitoma et al., 2008; Muecke, 2005; Poissonnet & Veron, 2000).

The contact, act or interaction among the individuals in delivering information, meanings and understanding is what is referred to as communication (Fisher, 1980). There exists growing evidence that communication has the ability to influence the bottom-line (Camden & Witt, 1983; Papa & Tracy, 1987; Snyder & Morris, 1984). This is also linked to work and productivity. In order to sustain good performance, managers must show initiative by developing and providing opportunities to their employees for learning new skills on communication.

According to Pfeffer (2005) the relationship between recruitment and deployment of talent and employee performance does exist and is significant. Managers have the responsibility of ensuring that employees have expertise to face the changes in their work environment. Organizations that ignore these changes and do not adjust their employee value proposition accordingly will fail to effectively develop, attract, or retain (Ernst & Young, 2010).

Literature review

Theoretical Literature Review

The connection between human resource development and organizational effectiveness has been round since the 1970s (Jha, 2014). The term Talent Management was put together by McKinsey and Company in 1997. In the first view Talent management tends to portray companies as strategic and deliberate in how they source, develop, and retain talent in the organization. Individual employee performance within a specific job has been a standard evaluation measurement tool of the contribution of an employee. The concept of talent pools forms the second focus of talent management within the employment space. Kesler, (2002) and Pascal, (2004) define Talent Management as a set of processes aligned towards ensuring that adequate flow of employees into jobs throughout the organization happens. Such approaches are similar to what is popularly referred to as succession planning/management or human resource planning (Jackson and Schuler, 1990). However, they can also include conventional Human Resources practices and processes like recruitment and selection (Lermusiaux, 2005).

Effective talent management has its basis on the talent DNA concept. Balancing the notion of organizational demand and talent supply, capabilities and need are two core elements. The blue print of talent management comprises of two parts, one is talent DNA which is the gist and the second one is performance management, career planning, compensation, learning, workforce planning, succession as an integral part of talent management (Jha, 2014). A talent management model looking at creating a roadmap leading to the realization of the

organizational objectives was put forward by Shравanthi and Sumanth (2008). The basis of the model is the three components of the 'DNA'; creation of a competencies database, identification of roles that are key, and determining competencies required for key roles. According to Shравanthi and Sumanth, (2008) a match between needs and capabilities must be achieved if an organization is to attain success in balancing business demand with supply of talent. The focus of Talent management is to develop people's capacity by building their potential. The relevance of the Talent DNA Model to this study is its emphasis to identify and map the skills and capabilities required throughout the organization. Such skills and capabilities should relate to individual roles in the workplace. This therefore underlines the importance of organizations' ability to hire the right people.

The origin of Human capital theory is in the mid-20th century work of Mincer (1958), Schultz (1961), and Becker (1962). The three authors proposed an explanation of personal income premised on the idea is that individuals are able to gain skills (human capital) that will turn them into more productive workers. This increased productivity then results to higher income. According to Human Capital theory, labour is a commodity to be traded in terms of sale and purchase. This theory dwells on the exploitation of labour by capital. However, Human capital refers to the knowledge, expertise, and skills one accumulates through education and training (Marimuthu, Arokiasamy & Ismail, 2009) unlike the traditional meaning associated with the term labour.

The human capital theory focuses on two main components which are individuals and organizations. This concept has been explored by Garavan and McGuire (2001) whose proposition is that human capital has flexibility and adaptability, development of organizational competencies enhancement of individual competencies, and individual employ as its key attributes. It argues that these attributes generate added value to outcomes of both individuals and organizations. Human capital theory has its basis on the assumption that formal education plays a pivotal role in improving the productive capacity of a population. The argument goes that an educated population is a productive population, and the opposite is also true. Rastogi (2000) refer to human capital as processes that relate to education, training, and other professional initiatives that serve to increase the levels of skills, knowledge, abilities, values, and social assets of an employee, which in turn results in the satisfaction of employees, better individual performance, and cascades to improved organizational performance.

In "Model of Effective Job Performance" McClelland and Boyatzis (1982) have addressed themselves to the linkage between job performance and competency. In the model, effective action and, therefore, good performance, is achieved when job demands, organizational environment and competencies of an individual employee are aligned. Any inconsistency between any one or two of those components will result to ineffective behavior leading to inaction. The capability that individual carry with them onto the job situation as required by the responsibilities of their role is represented by the individual's competencies, according to this model. These requirements of specific roles are considered as the demands of the job on any individual (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982).

Hay Group (2004) have identified employees as an organization's best source of competitive advantage. The reasoning is based on the fact that other sources of competitive advantage

such as services, products, strategies, and business model can all be easily replicated by competitors, therefore leaving out talented and competent employees as the sole most reliable and sustainable source of differentiation. Organizations invest more in management development and training to try and increase their capabilities. Ichniowski et al. (1996) posit that HRM practices have effect on individual performance that is less than what they have on organizational performance. Therefore, building and developing employee competencies will result in improved job and organizational performance. Businesses can engage in competitive strategy by honing the competencies of individual employees (Vathanophas, 2007).

Empirical Literature Review

Livingstone (2018) did a study on *The Education-Jobs Gap: Underemployment or Economic Democracy?* Routledge. The study inquired into the contributions of education and professional certification to job performance among financial accounting staff of university Nigeria. From the results, bursary staff holding professional qualifications reported higher job performance than those who do not hold professional qualifications.

Plantilla (2017) did a study on graduates' performance in the workplace; Employers' perspective. The revelation of the findings was that employers were happy and satisfied on how the graduates were performing in the areas of comprehension and job knowledge, understanding of general and specialized skills and the personal qualities they demonstrated in the workplace. There existed a significant difference on the performance of the graduates based on positions and length of service. Another study was conducted by Jaoko (2014) to establish the perceived relationship between employee academic qualifications and job performance in Mukuru Slums Development Projects, Nairobi County. The finding from the study revealed academic qualification as perceived to have a positive relationship with job performance. The study concluded that academic qualification has a positive relationship with employee performance. Sukrapi, Muljono and Purnaningsih (2014) sought to determine how professional competence relates with work motivation in the elementary school teacher performance. Results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between the professional competences of the teacher's performance and that there is a significant positive relationship between professional competence of teachers and work motivation of teachers together with teachers' performance.

Misra and Srivastava (2018) conducted a research on team-building, job satisfaction, and personal effectiveness competencies: the mediating effect of transformational leadership and technology. The results showed a positive relationship between the outcome variables and team-building competencies. This is therefore to say that team competencies play an important role in determining employee effectiveness and satisfaction. Seemiller (2018) did a research on enhancing leadership competencies for career readiness. His study found out that using a core set of leadership competencies uniformly in an entire institution is helpful to everyone because of having a universal language with ease of understanding. Rofiaty (2017) also conducted a research on the influence of leadership competencies, organizational culture, and employee motivation. The results showed that there is no significant direct influence between leadership competencies and organizational culture on employee performance, but there is an influence of leadership competencies and organizational culture on employee motivation, and also there is a significant influence of motivation on employee performance.

Mwithi (2016) did a study on the effect of leadership competencies on performance of state corporations in Kenya. Results by Mwithi (2016) revealed that all the leadership competencies did portend a positive and significant relationship with the financial performance of state corporations in Kenya. The difference however, was in the magnitude of the influence for the specific leadership competencies.

According to research by Demircioglu (2018) on examining the effects of social media use on job satisfaction in the Australian public service, it was observed from the results of the structural equation models (SEM) that using social media for work purposes is positively correlated to autonomy and competence. However, social media bears no statistical affect to relatedness.

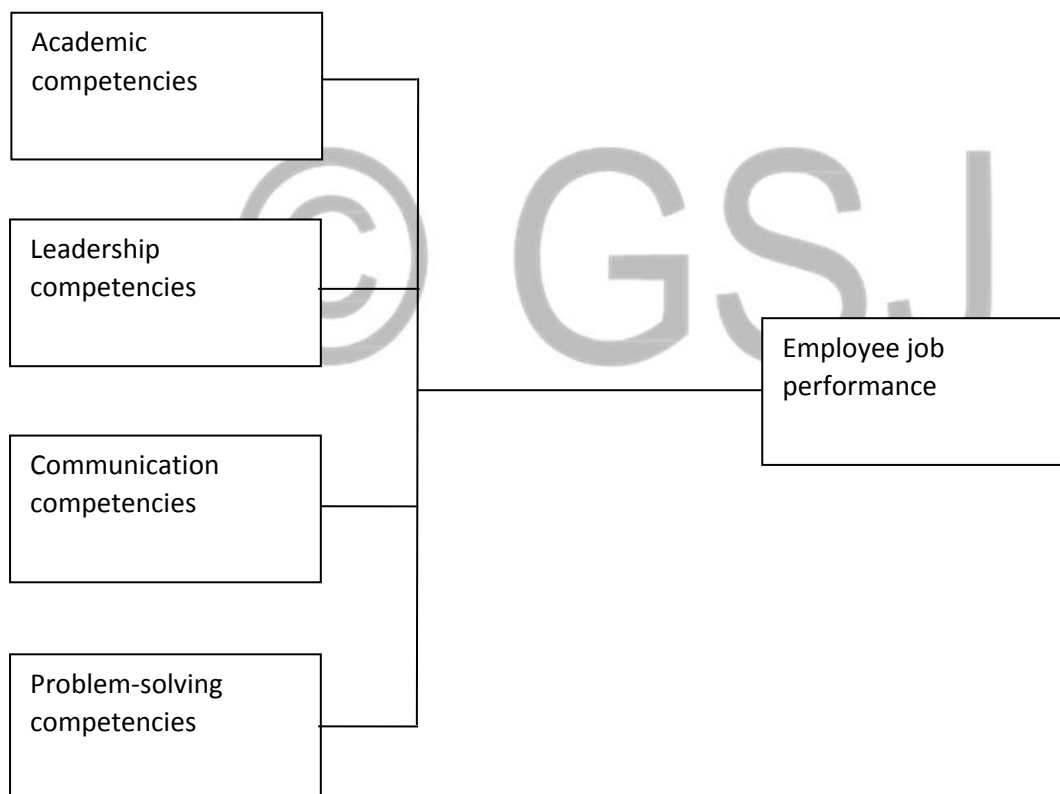
A study by Friolina et. al. (2017) sought to know whether competence, communication, and commitment affect the performance of civil servants. From the results, competence was found to have positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants in DET Bondowoso. The interpretation here then was that if civil servant's jobs match their competencies, there will be improved performance of the civil servants. Chang (2017) carried out did a research on the Effect of Communication Competence on Self-Efficacy in Kaohsiung Elementary School Directors. He observed that modern schools require educators to participate in continuous growth professionally to keep up with various social changes, and this has put them under immense pressure. Yu and Ko (2017) conducted a survey on communication competency as a mediator in the self-leadership to job performance relationship. The study findings identified communication competence and self-leadership as positively correlated with nursing performance. Femi (2014) did a study on the impact of communication on workers' performance in selected organizations in Lagos state, Nigeria. The study concluded that a relationship exists between effective communication and workers' performance, productivity and commitment. The study recommended regular communication between managers and employees as one way of improving the commitment and performance of workers.

Abosede and Adesanya (2017) did a study to investigate the contributions of self-efficacy and problem-solving skills on secretaries' job performance in Ogun State Public Service, Nigeria. The result obtained indicated that the predictor variables (self-efficacy and problem-solving skills) accounted for the job performance of Secretaries in the public service of Ogun State which implies that there is a significant combined contribution of self-efficacy and problem-solving skills in the prediction of job performance of Secretaries in the public service of Ogun State. According to Hagemann and Kluge (2017), solving complex problems portends a challenging and a high-level cognitive process for individuals. From the results, there does not exist any relationship between trust and action processes and team performance. Similarly, there was no relationship observed for cohesion. The only aspect of team members that was found to positively influence team performance in complex environments was collective orientation, and this was influenced by such action processes as coordination within the team.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables

Dependent Variable



Research Methodology

This study used a descriptive research design to answer questions concerning the effects of competencies on employee job performance at the World Food Programme, Kenya. The target population was 400 staff of the World Food Programme categorized into International professionals, National professional officers, General Service and Service Contracts. A sample of 196 was used so as to increase the reliability of the data. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling methods were employed in this study to generate the

sample. The aim of using stratified random sampling technique was to ensure that all employees in each level were represented. The target population was grouped into 4 strata (Higher Categories, International professionals, Junior professional officers, National professional officers, General Service and Service Contracts). Further, to select respondents from each position random sampling was used. This also served to ensure that the study eliminates bias in its choice of respondents. Primary data that was used in this study was collected through self-administered questionnaires. Five responses were presented on a Likert scale with five reference points (strongly disagrees, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree).

A pilot study covered 20 respondents representing 10 percent of the target population but not included in the sample. To address construct validity, the questionnaire was subdivided into several sections to enable each of the sections to assess information linked to a specific objective. This also helped in seeing to it that the same closely ties to the conceptual framework for this study. To ensure content validity, the researcher sought the indulgence of the research supervisor in aligning the instrument items to the concept under study. Twenty questionnaires making up 10% of the sample population were issued to those employees who were not included in the final sample of study, as a pilot. The data collection instruments returned a Cronbach coefficient of 0.83.

Data was collected with the help of research assistants using self-administered questionnaires. Data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative measures. Descriptive analysis and inferential statistics (chi-square test) were used. Data was analyzed using SPSS statistical package. The study adopted binomial logistic regression model because the dependent variable was categorical with two options (agree and disagree) on employee performance. The binomial logistic regression model assumed the form:

$$\log\left(\frac{P}{1-P}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3$$

Where X_1 , X_2 and X_3 are the independent variables and Y being the dependent variable, and the constants β_0 , β_1 , β_2 and β_3 and can be solved by solving the normal equations. The independent variables include: -

- X_1 = Academic competence
- X_2 = Leadership competence
- X_3 = Communication competence
- X_4 = Problem-solving competence

Summary of findings

The objective of this study was to evaluate the effects of competencies on job performance with a focus on World Food Programme, Kenya. From the study, there is an overall positive effect of competencies on employee job performance (50.2%) resulting from possession of academic, leadership, communication, and problem-solving competencies at the World Food Programme. Possession of academic competencies is 3.202 times more likely to improve employee performance while having leadership competencies is 0.176 times less likely to improve employee performance. Communication competencies and problem-solving

competencies will likely improve employee job performance 10.339 and 3.842 times over respectively.

Variables in the Model

	B	S.E.	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Academic competence	1.164	.753	1	.022	3.202
Leadership competence	-1.736	.513	1	.001	.176
Communication competence	2.336	1.026	1	.023	10.339
Problem solving competence	1.346	.126	1	.019	3.842
Constant	1.742	.207	1	.000	5.707

It was also observed from the findings that there are other factors that can positively improve employee performance up to 85%.

Classification Table

Observed	Predicted			Percentage Correct
	PERFORMANCE			
	Disagree	Agree		
Ste PERFORMANCE	Disagree	0	25	.0
p 1 Overall Percentage	Agree	0	171	100.0
				85.0

a. The cut value is .500

This research aimed to identify the effects of competencies on employee job performance in the World Food Programme. Based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the responses in regard to four identified competencies; academic, leadership, communication, and problem-solving competencies, it can be concluded that possession of these competencies has a positive effect on employee job performance. This is consistent with a study by Jaoko (2014) to establish the perceived relationship between employee academic qualifications and job performance in Mukuru Slums Development Projects, which concluded that academic qualification has a positive relationship with employee performance. The results indicate that relative to the other three competencies examined in this study, having leadership competencies contributes least in improving employees job performance. This position is in conflict with the findings of Rofiaty (2017) that there is no significant direct influence between leadership competencies and organizational culture on employee performance, but there is an influence of leadership competencies and organizational culture on employee motivation, and also there is a significant influence of motivation on employee performance.

On communication competencies, this study agrees with Chang (2017) who concluded that there exists a significant positive effect of communication competence on self-efficacy, a significant positive effect of emotional intelligence on self-efficacy, and Femi (2014) who found that a relationship between effective communication and workers' performance, productivity and commitment exists from a study on the impact of communication on workers' performance in selected organizations in Lagos state, Nigeria. This study identified possession of problem-solving skills by employees as significant contributor to employee job performance. This view is shared by Abosede and Adesanya (2017) in their study to

investigate the contributions of self-efficacy and problem-solving skills on secretaries' job performance in Ogun State Public Service, Nigeria where they concluded that a significant and positive relationship exists among self-efficacy, problem solving skills and job performance.

Conclusion

While the choice of competencies limits the generalizability of the results, this study provides new insight into other issues that potentially hold the key to improving employee job performance. From the study it is concluded that academic competencies improve employee job performance. Employees with the requisite academic competencies are able critically analyze given information and make accurate assessment of it, can use existing facts to solve a problem, actively get involved in learning while at work, have acquired basic computer skills required to perform their jobs and they have the right reading and writing skills. Possession of academic competencies is predicted to improve employee job performance by 3.202 times.

From the study it is concluded that leadership competencies improve employee job performance. Organization leaders holding personal relationship with subordinates, ensuring that subordinates achieve their goal, focusing on development of self-management leadership competencies, seeing to it that ethics are an integral part of organization leadership framework and leaders involve others in decision making and career growth achieve this by employing leadership competencies. Employees who have these competencies contribute to the improvement of job performance by 0.176 times.

Employees who possess communication competencies have skills and knowledge to understand literal meaning of utterances accurately, express themselves in friendly and respectable manner, are able to understand the receivers' attitude during communication, can communicate in a cohesive and coherent manner and have required knowledge to compensate for communication breakdowns. Such employees likely to have the biggest contribution to employee job performance at 10.332. Therefore from the study it is concluded that communication competencies improve employee job performance.

Employees' ability to recognize the existence of a problem, analyze the problem and assess the impact of an alternative solution, solve problems in constructive manner, can see a problem from a professional perspective, are able to do this because they have problem-solving skills. Having problem-solving competencies improves employee job performance 1.3842 times over. Therefore from the study it is concluded that problem-solving competencies improve employee job performance.

Therefore from the study it is concluded that there is an overall positive effect on employee job performance (50.2%) resulting from possession of academic, leadership, communication, and problem-solving competencies at the World Food Programme. This is a clear illustration that employees possessing such competencies are likely to perform better than their counterparts who lack these competencies, but it also raises the question of what other competencies could have the same effect, or indeed whether having these competencies can have the same results in other employment set-ups.

Recommendations

Competencies form the foundation for optimal performance and engagement at work. Identification and developing specific competencies can be key to continued improvement in employee job performance. Given that the choice of competencies limit the generalizability of the results of this study, it is recommended that additional factors that influence employee job performance be identified and examined exhaustively.

While it is now a well-established fact that competencies have a significant positive effect on employee job performance, a more wholistic investigation is recommended to establish what else influences employee job performance. Physical amenities, nature of work, freedom to make decisions, availability of tools, and government policy are some of the more immediate areas that could be studied to find their contribution towards employee job performance.

Policy makers have a chance to come plug the gap that would encourage development of requisite competencies to boost employee job performance. Legislation on the minimum on-the-job training each employer provides to their employees, as well as an obligation on each employee to accumulate a certain number of continuing professional development points (CPD) per year is a good start towards development of competencies.



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