



The Influence of Employee Commitment on the Performance of State Departments in Kenya

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Abstract

The Public Service in Kenya is encountering numerous problems that demand attention to achieve its maximum capability of delivering high-quality services to citizens. The study is to assess the influence of employee commitment on performance of state departments in Kenya. Data obtained was then analysed through descriptive statistics, frequencies and correlational analysis, that the correlation between variables organisational commitment and organisational performance is strong and significant ($r = 0.610$, $p < 0.01$), indicating a positive relationship and the findings then presented through tables, bar charts, and histograms. Research limitations are constraints of time and difficulty in gathering information from state department officers. The results revealed that employee commitment improves productivity, service delivery, cost efficiency, and a positive work environment in state departments. Thus, the state departments should implement are Strengthen Leadership and Management, Employee Engagement, Improve Working Conditions, Promote Employee Well-being, and Implement Fair Policies and Practices.

Introduction

Employee commitment's influence on state departments' performance in Kenya is significant. Straatmann et al. (2018) argued that commitment is a mental and emotional condition that pertains to an employee's connection to their workplace. This state of mind can affect their decision to remain or quit the organisation. The loyalty and dedication of an employee to an organisation are determined by levels of commitment, which influence organisational effectiveness and overall performance.

According to Ahmadi et al. (2023), employee commitment involves a strategic procedure that addresses management or leadership vacancies and provides chances for high-potential individuals to cultivate the necessary abilities for future positions. This process entails recognising prospective successors, fostering their competencies and expertise, and guaranteeing a seamless leadership handover. Mokgalapa (2023) says this process mostly involves assessing and developing internal talent, providing training and mentoring, creating development plans, and establishing simple and clear guidelines for transferring responsibilities.

A comprehensive strategy for future employee commitment involves formulating an optimal blueprint considering the organisation's aspirations, values, and principles. The big picture is a constant and smooth transition. Mehrtak et al. (2024) argue that missing organisational succession planning can inhibit talented and ambitious employees from progressing. Therefore, succession plans should be developed and implemented to realise beneficial productivity and overall organisational performance.



However, implementing employee commitment is challenging because the global public service is experiencing ageing dynamics of human capital, leading to inefficiencies and structural gaps that hinder delivering services to the citizens. Also, the public sector is not attractive in the employment market due to low remuneration, limiting workers who want to join. In addition, the natural staff attrition, aged workers, and high turnover aggravated by a lack of succession plans create unprecedented challenges. Furaselli et al. (2019) add that managers globally are increasingly concerned about succession planning due to challenges organisations encounter when filling crucial positions requiring employees with specific skill sets and experience. This challenge is crucial, especially where specialised skills are required. For instance, it takes a long time to train in some professions, and the Public service environment does not encourage a system of harnessing inherent tacit knowledge, expertise, and skills possessed by retired officers. Also, when technical staff is abruptly exited, recruiting and getting the right person takes time. This leads to inefficiencies in operations, and newly hired employees also require training to acclimatise to the organisation, which is expensive (Torrance et al., 2023).

In the past, organisations secured the loyalty of their employees by guaranteeing job security. However, many organisations have responded to competitive pressures by downsizing, restructuring, and transforming, thus creating a less secure organisational climate. Therefore, a growing number of employees feel they are victims of broken promises. One of the challenges facing modern organisations involves maintaining employee commitment in the current business environment. These organisations can achieve this by developing a new “work contract”. In today’s workplace, employees face more ambiguity in their daily activities and decreased job security (CahayaSanthi et al., 2020). With no assurance of continued employment, workers have now raised their expectations in other areas. For instance, employees expect employers to demonstrate their commitment to pleasant working conditions, access to training and development, a safe working environment and a balance between work and employees’ commitments outside the workplace. Organisations are faced with ever-increasing competition. As they prepare for new challenges, one of the key components of survival is maintaining and upgrading the organisation’s ability to use human resources effectively and efficiently. According to (Katz, 2023), employee behaviours essential for organisational effectiveness include employees entering and remaining with the organisations, carrying out specific role requirements, and engaging in innovative and spontaneous activity beyond role prescriptions. The appointment of good workers is thus critical, but the organisation’s ability to create a committed workforce is of greater significance. Hence, managers need to understand the concept of commitment - what it is, how it operates, and most importantly, which behaviours are displayed by employees committed to the organisations.

The Government of Kenya recognises a history of poor performance in the public sector, particularly regarding resource management, which has hindered sustainable economic growth. Factors contributing to this include excessive regulations, political interference, mismanagement of resources, and an oversized staff (Government of Kenya, 2004). (Halachmi,2020) noted that increasing pressure for transparency and accountability necessitates demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness to justify future resource allocations, making performance measurement appealing. Ensuring that introducing performance management does not stifle innovation and reasonable experimentation with alternative service delivery methods is crucial.

Employee commitment is increasingly becoming a valued asset in state departments. For this purpose, employee commitment is viewed as a commitment to the state department and employees to their occupations (Robinson, 2023). Various disciplines have adopted the topic as a theme in their research, offering fresh and significant insights (Brown, McHardy, McNabb, and Taylor, 2016). These recent advances include new approaches to the conceptualisation of employee commitment. It is no longer



good enough to have employees who come to work faithfully every day and do their jobs independently. Employees now must think like entrepreneurs while working in teams and prove their worth. However, they also want to be part of a successful organisation which provides a good income and the opportunity for development and secure employment John and Elyse (2023). John and Elyse (2023) state that a committed employee will remain with the organisation. Through the years, numerous research studies have been conducted to determine the accuracy of this statement. In the end, many have concluded that committed employees remain with the organisation longer than less committed employees (Scott, 2021).

Employee commitment to the performance of state departments

A study conducted by Cheliah et al. (2021) examined three categories of organisational loyalty: continuance, normative, and affective commitment. Affective commitment involves employees' active involvement, identification, and emotional attachment with the company. Continuance commitment is tied to acknowledging the potential drawbacks of quitting the organisation, whereas normative commitment refers to a feeling of duty to stay employed. These various forms of commitment have distinct implications for employees' behaviours in the workplace. Managers typically consider these behaviours as they impact or contribute to the organisation's overall performance.

Waktola (2021) examined the correlation between organisational climate and employees' commitment levels. The findings showed a positive connection between employees' organisational commitment and the organisational climate. The study measured the organisational climate using trust, autonomy, support, reward, fairness, and teamwork. All of the factors had a positive and significant relationship with commitment. Commitment was also measured using normative and affective measures, which positively influenced commitment, while continuance commitment showed no significant relationship.

According to Kimutai and Sakataka (2015), engagement and commitment are influenced by three key factors: indirect advantages, direct monetary incentives, and non-monetary perks. The strength and attractiveness of these factors vary for employees. In the context of employee engagement, promotional opportunities were identified as the leading direct financial driver. Job-relevant training, health benefits, and positive interactions with other staff were found to have the greatest influence on commitment and involvement at the Rift Valley Bottlers Company. When staff take their responsibilities as important and aligned with their personal goals and the organisation's values, they become more engaged and display increased commitment, enhancing organisational performance.

Joseph et al. (2023) conclude that when staff perceive an organisation is committed to providing a supportive environment, they reciprocate by demonstrating commitment. Trust in the organisation is developed, and employees become highly committed when they believe the support they receive is genuine and reflects the organisation's commitment.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the conceptual framework below, employee commitment is the independent variable, and state department performance in Kenya is the dependent variable.

Independent Variable



Dependent Variable



Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework*

Source: *Researcher (2024)*



Methods

This study adopted a descriptive research approach, and quantitative data were collected. This approach comprehensively describes the target population's characteristics and the phenomenon under investigation. The research mainly used a descriptive study design since it is easier and simpler to conduct. The independent variable under the study included employee commitment, while the dependent variable was organisational performance.

The 51-person population consisted of government human resources management and development officers, who are the technical officers involved in succession planning in state departments. A sample is a target group in a specific population. In this scenario, the population is regarded as small, and therefore, A Census sampling technique was used due to the small number. All 51 human resources and development directors were enumerated.

Table 1: Sample Size

Category	Sampling Method=Census
Director's HRM&D	51
Total	51

Source: Researcher (2024)

The Likert scale measures these variables. Participants were asked to express their degree of concurrence with the assertions using a rating system from 1 to 5, where 1 signifies strong disagreement, and 5 indicates strong agreement.

The study then utilised a closed-question questionnaire as the data collection instrument. This method was chosen to minimise bias and obtain unbiased data. Before administering the questionnaires, a pre-test was conducted to ensure that respondents understood the questions clearly and that the generated data was valuable.

Results and Discussion

To establish how employee commitment influences the performance of state departments

Frequency Analysis

Table 2: Lack of career advancement opportunities leads to low employee commitment

	N	%
Neither Disagree Nor Agree	2	5.4%
Agree	16	43.2%
Strongly Agree	19	51.4%

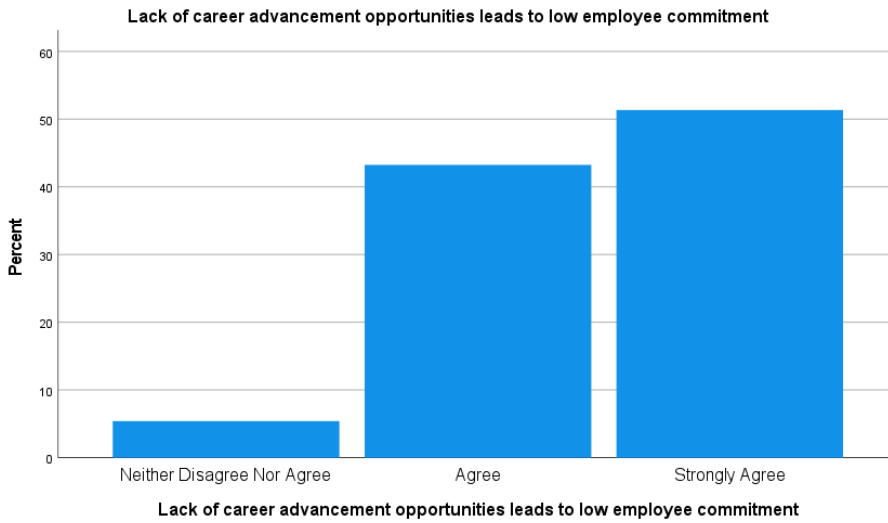


Figure 2: Lack of career advancement opportunities leads to low employee commitment

Examining the responses from the surveyed participants, it is evident that 5.4% neither disagreed nor agreed with the proposition that a lack of career advancement opportunities results in low employee commitment. Conversely, a significant 43.2% agreed, while an even more substantial 51.4% strongly agreed with the statement. The bar graph accompanying this analysis encapsulates the visual representation of these findings.

Table 3: Lack of leadership encouragement to employees to participate in decision-making leads to low commitment

	N	%
Disagree	1	2.7%
Neither Disagree Nor Agree	1	2.7%
Agree	25	67.6%
Strongly Agree	10	27.0%



Lack of leadership encouragement to employees to participate in decision-making leads to low commitment

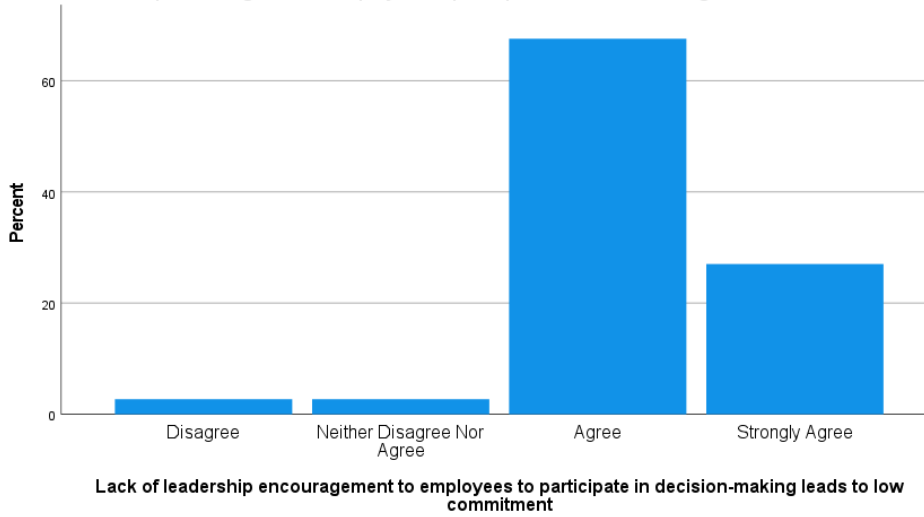


Figure 3: Lack of leadership encouragement to employees to participate in decision-making leads to low commitment

A mere 2.7% of the respondents expressed disagreement, while an equivalent percentage neither disagreed nor agreed. In stark contrast, a substantial 67.6% acknowledged agreement, emphasising the importance of leadership encouragement in fostering commitment. Additionally, 27.0% of participants strongly agreed with the statement, underscoring the pivotal role of leadership support in bolstering employee commitment. The graph depicts the distribution of responses across different categories, with the horizontal axis denoting response categories and the vertical axis indicating the percentage frequency for each category.

Table 4: Poor benefits plans for employees lead to low commitment

	N	%
Neither Disagree nor Agree	5	13.5%
Agree	21	56.8%
Strongly Agree	11	29.7%

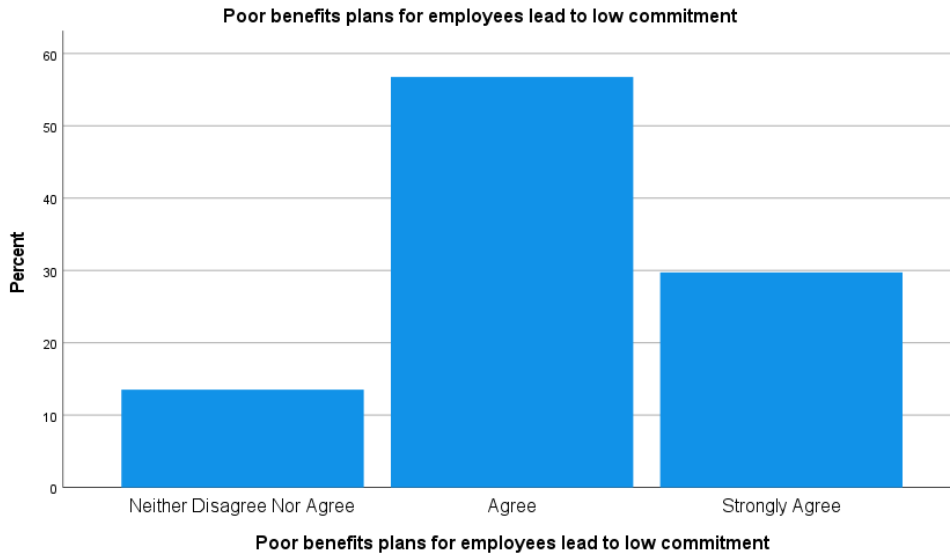


Figure 4: Poor benefits plans for employees lead to low commitment

Among the respondents, 13.5% expressed a neutral standpoint, indicating neither disagreement nor agreement. In contrast, 56.8% of participants acknowledged agreement, emphasising the perceived impact of insufficient benefits on commitment. Additionally, 29.7% strongly agreed with the assertion that poor benefits plans lead to low commitment. The bar graph depicts a visual representation of these responses.

Table 5: Job insecurity lowers commitment

	N	%
Neither Disagree Nor Agree	2	5.4%
Agree	13	35.1%
Strongly Agree	22	59.5%

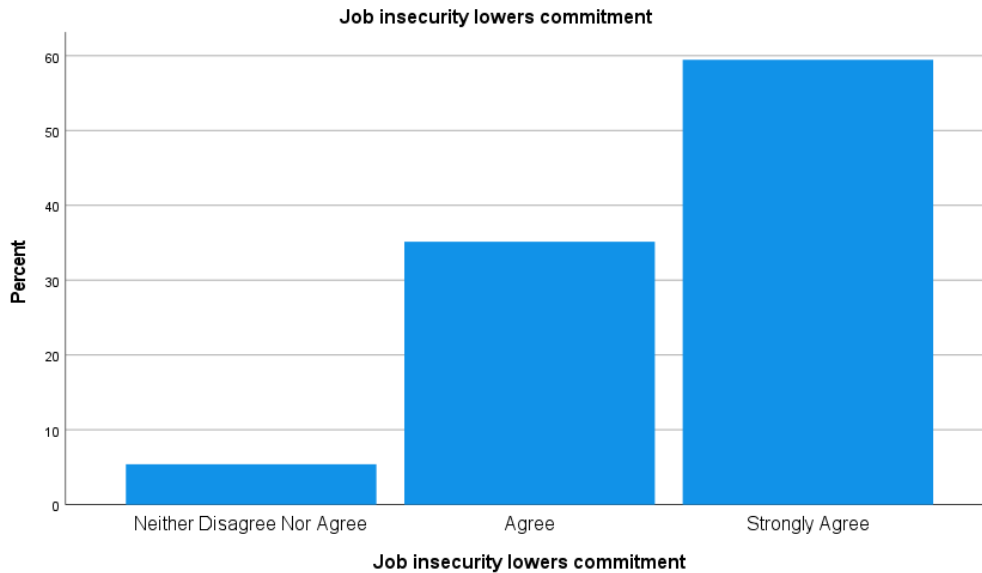


Figure 5: Job insecurity lowers commitment

The table presents a breakdown of participants' responses regarding the impact of job insecurity on employee commitment. Among the respondents, 5.4% neither disagreed nor agreed, indicating a neutral stance. In contrast, a significant 35.1% agreed, while a notable majority of 59.5% strongly agreed that job insecurity lowers employee commitment. The graph illustrates the distribution of responses across categories, where the horizontal axis delineates response categories and the vertical axis represents the percentage frequency for each category.

Correlation Analysis of Employee Commitment and performance of state departments in Kenya

The correlation table in Appendix 6 shows that the correlation between variables a and b is strong and significant ($r = 0.610, p < 0.01$), indicating a positive relationship. Conversely, variables d and e show a negative and moderately strong correlation ($r = -0.382, p < 0.01$). Notably, variables k and l exhibit the highest positive correlation ($r = 0.496, p < 0.01$), while variables a and c have the lowest correlation ($r = -0.036, p > 0.05$). The results suggest varying degrees of association among commitment variables, with some statistically significant relationships at 0.01 and 0.05 levels.

Conclusion

Employee commitment plays a pivotal role in shaping the performance of state departments in Kenya. Public servants' commitment level directly impacts productivity, service delivery, and overall organisational effectiveness. Based on the analysis, several key conclusions can be drawn as follows: It is strongly agreed that lack of career advancement opportunities leads to low employee commitments; It is agreed that lack of leadership encouragement to employees to participate in decision-making leads to low employee commitment; It is agreed that poor benefits plan for employee lead to low employee commitment; and It is strongly agreed that job insecurity lowers employee commitment.

State departments require the following recommendations: Invest in leadership development programmes to cultivate supportive and effective leaders who can inspire commitment; Establish regular recognition and reward systems to acknowledge employee contributions and boost morale; Offer continuous training and career development programmes to help employees grow and advance in their careers; Create a safe, conducive, and supportive work environment that promotes job



satisfaction and well-being; and Implement policies that support flexible working hours and work-life balance to enhance overall employee satisfaction and commitment.

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