

## Research Article

# Influence of Human Resources on Hotel Performance in Kitale Municipality Trans Nzoia County

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**Abstract:** The study aimed at investigating the influence of human resources in Kitale Municipality Trans Nzoia County. The study was significant to private and public hotel institution in realigning their overall performance in various aspects. Literature was reviewed basing on the study objectives. The project adopted a descriptive survey design. Target population of 240 employees constituted the respondents. A sample of 150 respondents was selected using appropriate techniques to represent the study population in data collection. Instrument reliability was determined using test retest technique. The questionnaires and interview schedules were used as primary tools for data collection. At the end of research process, questionnaires were checked for inaccuracies and incompleteness and cleaned accordingly. Data analyzed was entered using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) where checks were conducted and inconsistent data was cleared. Descriptive tools of analysis such as frequency tables and percentages were used to show the result of the data. From the study findings, it was observed that human resource competency was low. The study recommends that the hotels in Trans Nzoia develop a training policy framework which can guarantee capacity development leading to upward mobility in the service.

**Keywords:** Human resources, population and influence.

## Introduction

Hospitality sector in Kenya dates back to the colonial era. As a necessity to the British and the workers who were involved in building the railway the industry grew as the railway network expanded towards Uganda. The growth saw hotels attaining international five stars rating as early as 1960. Currently there are over 500 licensed international hotels in Kenya offering a diverse range of accommodation packages to suit every need. The industry has been one of the fastest growing industries in recent times with net worth running in the billions. The trend was mostly boosted by tourism that was supported by the economy and security. The major markets for the industry have always been in the west where the seasonal weather made people move out into Africa at given times. This trend always turned into good fortune for the industry. However recent events of terrorism are threatening to reverse the gains made so far prompting hotels to look elsewhere for business. Part of the efforts also involves improving performance in terms of internal business processes and the way they position themselves in the market.

The critical success factor in the service industries including hotels and restaurants are the issues of related to the workers engagement that includes but limited to training, retraining programs, and the teams work. This eventually decreases overall staff turnover and increase overall staff satisfaction which positively affect performance. Successful institution has clear strategies on quality as exhibited with quality goals and unique ways of implementation.

Their main agenda is to concentrate on the client and bring out means of utilizing information by engaging different tools of data collection for instance, market surveys and focus group discussions (Kotler and Amstrong, 2008). Travel and tourism is part of the hospitality industry and therefore has a strong interrelation between these two industries (Walker, 2010). Whenever there is tourism there is increased hospitality activities. This is therefore the main reason why the hospitality industry is considered seasonal, sometimes experiencing low occupancy rates which affects the revenues, while at the vice versa is true.

Performance is the outcome or output from service delivery, products and processes that enable evaluation against results, standards and goals set (Badu, 2012). Performance evaluation in the industry has been and remains a big challenge, and this is so because different concepts have been used as performance standard measure.

### **Human Resource and Hotel Performance**

The effectiveness of human resource function in an institution is influenced the process of staffing (Gamage, 2004). Therefore staffing is a crucial function of human resource practice in any institution. Therefore this implies that settling on wrong candidates can be costly to an institution. According to (Delaney and Huselid, 1996; and Rodriguez and Ventura, 2003) they urged that adoption of what has been variously referred to as high involvement or commitment to work practices, high performance, including comprehensive selection and recruitment procedures, employee involvement and training can lead to positive institution results such as reduced absenteeism and worker turnover, improved staff efficiency and unlimitedly better overall performance in an institution.

Training and development is one of the critical objectives in performance appraisals, it also provide feedback on how to foster employee development and growth (Squires and Adler, 1998) points out that an appraisal system should not only evaluate what has been accomplished but also direct future development, maximize existing strength and address skill deficiency, therefore, a working appraisal system is the first phase in the training and development of employees. The performance gaps identified in the process helps the managers generate training needs in each department, in the end of the process the human resource department was to gather the training needs of the institution. Training and development is used as the "litmus test" of human resource management therefore the policies and procedures implemented is expected to be structured forward looking and based on training needs identified within the appraisal system.

Ehrlich (1994) argues that the speed in which staff learn to perform a new task is very crucial in today's environment ever changing technologies. He is backed up by Boudreau and Ramstad, (1997) who are of the opinion that every manager must make proper planning to ensure that each employee not only poses a skill to undertake their present job but also develop broader skill to mitigate future challenges.

Investing in employees is therefore key element and expected to produce positive returns through increased employee productivity and overall institution performance (Rumberger, 1987). Roos and Pike (2001) argue that human resources management practices influence the development of a company's human capital and recruitment and selection procedures do influence the quality and type of skills new employees possess. Pfeffer (1994) concurs with their argument and points out that institution must utilize available resources to adopt and mentor employees who possess better skills and capabilities than that of their competitor to succeed in today's ever changing global business environment.

From a hotel industry perspective, quality service starts with quality staff for it to produce and deliver competitively. The hotel industry uses both formal and informal recruitment sources. Formal sources are for most times reserved for specialized positions like sales and marketing executives, hotel engineers, and accountants with ICPAK qualifications among others. The informal sources of candidates are in most cases limited to lower cadre staff. Some empirical studies points out that informal recruitment methods produce staffs who remains in an institution longer than those recruited by other methods (Taylor, 1994). Wanous, (1980) argues that informal recruitment methods, such as referrals is identified as a realistic job preview and thus gives accurate and comprehensive information about the job and the institution. With such information, the job applicants who are attracted have a clear insight of what the job entails and confidently self-select themselves to accept or decline the position offered ultimately form a more informed expectation about the job (Watson, 1989).

An effective recruitment and selection process should therefore be able to attract staff with the required attitudinal and behavioral characteristics, induct them into a quality culture and retain their services. Unfortunately, Schlesinger and Heskett (1992) argue that some hospitality institutions become trapped in a self-perpetuating recruitment and retention cycle of high staff turnover. The cycle of failure seems to ensure turning deterioration of service quality, managerial headaches, and long-term poor service. Effective communication system is the other practice on the list of human resource management best practices is extensive communication systems or diffusion of information. Kahneman *et al.*, (1982) argued that individuals are poor processors of information and therefore in most cases fail to understand the true causal relationships among the variables they encounter at the work place. It is therefore understandable when employees misjudge situations and make wrong decisions. Under such circumstances, Kahneman *et al.*, (1982) believe that employees rely on colleague's assistance to collect information concerning the environment so as to better understand the available alternatives and make correct decisions. They support their argument with the views of Wright *et al.*, (1997) who found out that there are instances where human resources personnel were unable to translate company's strategic goals into supportive human resources activities. Participation and worker involvement are believed to be effective in promoting institutional performances.

Teece *et al.*, (1997) pointed out that decentralization and worker involvement can not only facilitate the process of market evaluation but can also enhance the transformation of worker capabilities in obtaining an advantage over competitors. Some decentralization of authority and workers' participation are always required in any operating unit in order to develop an appropriate system of practices for the unique competitive situation (Wright *et al.*, 1997). These authors (Kahneman *et al.*, 1982; Teece *et al.*, 1997; Wright *et al.*, 1997) therefore believe that a set of proper information sharing and worker involvement mechanism is indispensable in any work setting. According to Gilliland and Langdon, (1998) an effective appraisal system is the one that inspires employees to believe that their input in the appraisal process matters to management. They propose that such input may range from having the opportunity to challenge or rebut the evaluation one receives to judging one's own performance through self-appraisal. Regardless of the nature of employee input. It is clear that giving employees a voice in their own appraisals enhances the perceived fairness of the appraisal process, which in turn increases the likelihood that employees accept the appraisal system as a legitimate and constructive means of gauging their performance contributions. As noted by Gilliland and Langdon (1998), without the perception of fairness, a system that is designed to appraise, reward, motivate, and develop can actually have the opposite effect and create frustration and resentment.

From a service industry perspective, it has been argued that appraisals play a key role in developing, communicating and monitoring the achievement of quality standards (Deblieux, 1991; Fletcher, 1993). Service industry are now increasingly setting employee performance standards based on customer care indicators and appraising staff against these (Wilkinson *et al.*, 1993). Customer service data for use in appraising employees are gathered in a variety of methods first, there is the use of a range of customer surveys, such as via the completion of customer care cards, telephone surveys, customer focus groups, postal surveys, and complaint lines. Institutions are now using such sources more frequently and are increasingly sophisticated in how they gather customer views (Silvestro, 1990). Secondly, there is the increasing use of the so called "mystery shopping". Mystery shopping is argued to give a company a rich source of data that cannot be uncovered by other means, such as customer surveys. (Moore, 1990; Ring, 1992) mystery shopping is also seen as being particularly useful in revealing staff performance that causes customers to leave without purchasing. Cook *et al.*, (2004) advises using them to reward staff for good performance rather than punish them for transgressions can help that acceptance. Poor ratings should be used, as a source for identifying training needs.

Turnover represents an outflow of skills and may consequently seriously hinder competitiveness, efficiency and quality delivery. Turnover can occur for a variety of reasons with the main ones being retirement, redundancy, dismissal and resignation. However, resignation occurrence which is hardest to predict, has the most disruptive effects. Research shows that employees who leave voluntarily tend to be above average performers (Staw, 1980) and in most cases leave to join competitor institutions. A particular problem for institutions with high turnover rates is maintaining high standards of customer care. Reichok, (1993) sees retaining carefully selected employees as the key to customer retention The costs of practices designed to facilitate the retention of employees; for example attractive salaries, improved working conditions, job security are more than offset by the financial benefits of retaining existing customers over the costs of winning new ones, the so called 'relationship marketing' (Berry, 1983).

The employee relations climate in the hotel industry has also been characterized as poor, with high labor turnover and high rates of absenteeism, dismissals, accidents, grievances and disciplinary cases (Lucas, 1996; Kelliher and Johnson, 1997). Price (1994) argued that in the UK industry, there was "a dearth of sophisticated human resource management practices." The industry therefore has a negative image with vacancies in the hotel and catering sector being more difficult to fill than any other industry, and the considerable use of casual and part-time workers (Pnce, 1994; Lucas, 1995; Guerner and Lockwood, 1989). It is argued that sound employee relations create a perception of institution fairness. And therefore described as the role of fairness as it directly relates to the workplace and it is concerned with the ways employees determine if they have been treated fairly in their jobs and the ways in which these determinations influence other work-related variables (Moorman, 1991).

The human resources management practices, policies and procedures that operate in an institution therefore impact on individual's perceptions of bias and fairness (Kurland and Egan, 1999). Studies show that where employees believe they are treated fairly in the workplace then they hold positive attitudes towards the institution (Moorman, 1991). It is therefore argued that sound employee relations engages employees in their work and therefore create commitment and by implication loyalty to the institution Tasker (2004) defines engagement as a beneficial two way relationship where employees and employers go the extra mile for one another. Guest, (2002) argues that a relationship exists between the use

of appropriate human resources management practices and positive employee attitudes among them job satisfaction and commitment He further claims that these practices equip employees and enable them to function autonomously and responsibly. As such, institutions with have low staff turnover as it enables employees to cope with any change in the work environment. Kahn (1990) demonstrated that there are three psychological conditions of earning, fullness, safety and availability that exhibited positive relations with employee commitment. He defines psychological meaningfulness as "the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards". Psychological on the other hand is defined as feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career finally, psychological availability is an individual's belief that she/he has the physical, emotional or cognitive resources to engage the self at work.

## Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population for the study was 240 consisting of Hotel Owners, Managers, and employees and Customers drawn from the 12 hotels consisting of low level, middle level and top level distributed across. This study used a simple random sampling technique to select 5 hotels which was representing to 40% of the population. The study used questionnaires to collect data from the employees and hotel supervisors, and interview guide for the senior managers and hotel owners. Data collected was keyed into statistical package for social science (SPSS) where a check was conducted and inconsistent data cleared. Descriptive tools of analysis such as frequency tables and percentages were are used to show the result of the data.

## Human Resource and Performance of Hotels in Trans Nzoia County

The respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement on the following statement regarding the human resource capabilities influencing hotel performance in Trans Nzoia County. They were required to use the scale of 1-5 where 1-is a very large extent, 2-large extent 3-no extent 4-small extent and 5- very small extent in giving their responses.

**Table 1. Humane Resource and its Influence on Performance**

		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>		
<b>Statement</b>		<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>AV</b>	<b>STD</b>
The hotel has a staff training policy	115	13.04	13.91	6.96	45.24	20.88	23	17.18
Staff regularly undergo training and development	115	10.43	11.3	8.7	38.28	31.32	23	15.81
The hotel has employed only competent staff in the hotel	115	23.49	33.93	7.83	18.27	16.53	23	11.05
The hotel has set clear communication and feedback channels both internal and external.	115	31.32	30.45	6.96	13.04	18.27	23	12.31
The hotel pays its workers well and performance appraisals are satisfactory	115	17.4	20.88	11.3	19.14	31.32	23	8.37
There is teamwork across all departments and work is seamless thus employee retention.	115	16.53	26.97	5.22	33.06	18.27	23	12.23



As shown in Table 1, it is indicated that majority of the respondents 45.24% strongly disagreed that the hotels have a staff training policy, with 20.88% strongly disagreeing on the same. 13.91% and 13.04% agreed and strongly agreed respectively to hotels having a training policy in place.

On whether the staff regularly undergoing training and development again, the majority of the respondents were in disagreement with 38.28% and 20.88% disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively compared to 11.93% and 10.43% who agreed and strongly agreeing respectively. There was a general agreement that many of the hotels have employed competent staff in the hotel with 33.93 agreeing and 23.49 strongly agreeing. Only 18.27% and 16.53% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively to hotels employing competent staff.

The study findings showed that most hotels have set clear communication and feedback channels both internal and external majority of the respondents were in agreement 31.32% and 30.45% strongly agreeing and agreeing compared to a cumulative 18.27% and 13.04% of the respondents who strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively to the same assertion. On whether the hotels pay its workers well and performance appraisals are satisfactory, the study found out that majority of the respondents 31.32% and 19.14% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively as opposed to only 20.88% agreeing and 17.4% strongly agreeing. Cumulatively, majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the pay structures in their hotels.

On average there was disagreement in terms of there being teamwork across all departments and work is seamless thus employee retention with 33.06% and 18.27% disagreeing and strongly disagreeing compared to 26.97% agreeing and 16.53% strongly disagreeing respectively compared. An interview from the hotel managers on question of Humane Resource and its Influence on Performance drew varied responses.

In the interview carried out, the managers and hotel owners were asked to tell if they had adequate staff. Their responses were as below:

Adequacy of workforce in the hotels: one manager said,

*".....staff is not adequate particularly due to the changing dynamics of clientele flow. We tend to hire more staff during peak season and reduce it accordingly to manage costs during the low season."*

Another manager said,

*Staff is always a challenge due to the high turnover ratio of staff. Getting the right skilled you would wish to keep becomes a challenge due to this aspect of staff turnover."*

Majority of the responses indicated that there was inadequate staff in the hotel industry in the major hotel in town. This could imply that the hotels have no policy to attract the working staff given that the turnover of staff is high.

On Training of employees one hotel owner said:

*".....yes, we do train employees on need basis. When we feel for instance that the production department needs to update their skills on production, we organize for a raining on the same. The other respondents were in agreement that did not have a training policy in place to guide training of their staff."*

The respondents were then required to tell if the training they held had an effect on job mobility of the employees. One of the managers of the hotels said:

*'.....the trainings are meant to improve the workers skills and not necessary for job mobility. Employees move up the ladder depending on their delivery and not just the training they attend'*

Motivate and maintaining of the human resource. A manager of one of the hotels said:

*.....to motivate staff and maintain them within the hotel we offer them continuous training. We also give them bench marking to other competing facilities for them to learn. We also take care of their welfare for instance, give them uniforms for free, food, and contributions are done among staff and management whenever one of them has need which is stipulated in the welfare memorandum.*

The manager for in one of hotels on the same question said:

*.....the hotel offers competitive pay for the worker and ensures continuous job mobility after some training or seniority from work experience.*

Yet another manager of another hotel said:

*..... To sustain the workers for a long time, we give them security of tenure, by giving them long time contracts coupled with some competitive remuneration.....* the other responses from the other hotels rotated around the approaches raised by the three aforementioned hotels. Pay, welfare, contracts and job mobility featured across the other facilities. On the influence of training on performance of the nearly all the respondents were in agreement that a well trained workforce can have a better productivity hence, better performance of the hotels.

Comparing the responses of the employees and management, it is observed that there are glaring gaps on matters human resource management and performance. For instance, whereas the management says they offer competitive salaries, the employees say the opposite. Much as the management says there is continuous job training, from the employees perspective, the trainings don't follow a preset policy which employees can be predict on so as to say by such and such time, one will undergo the trainings and hence, promoted to the next level. This seems to affect negatively the confidence and motivation of the worker to give their whole in the continuous changing work place. The findings of this study correlates in many ways to previous works done elsewhere. On having the right staff in the hotels, the study agrees with Gamage (2004) who found out in his study that the effectiveness of human resource function in an institution is influenced directly by the right staffing. He argues that settling on wrong candidates can be costly to an institution in terms of productivity and performance.

The study further is in agreement with Delaney and Huselid (1996), Youndt *et al.*, (1996), Singh (2003) and Rodnguez and Ventura (2003) they urged that adoption of what has been variously referred to as high involvement or commitment to work practices, high performance, including comprehensive selection and recruitment procedures, employee involvement and training can lead to positive institution results such as reduced absenteeism and worker turnover, improved staff efficiency and unlimitedly better overall performance in an institution.

The study however disagree with studies done by Ehrlich (1994) who argued that the speed in which staff learn to perform a new task is very crucial in today's environment ever changing technologies. He is backed up by Boudreau and Ramstad, (1997) who are of the opinion that

every manager must make proper planning to ensure that each employee not only poses a skill to undertake their present job but also develop broader skill to mitigate future challenges. This proper planning is absent in the current study hence, making the gap between this study and the works of this scholars. In-as-much as the hotel management opinions that there is continuous training; the workers are indifferent on the same. This confirms that there is lack of unity of purpose and communication.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that, the hotels do not have a staff training policy, enough working staff, employ low skilled workforce, poor remuneration and functional appraisal tools. The study also conclude that the hotel have a communication channels in place.

### **Recommendation**

From the findings, the study recommends that the hotels in Trans Nzoia should employ not only enough manpower but also, competent staff that can drive the mission and vision of the hotel hence, realize performance. The hotels develop a training policy framework which can guarantee capacity development leading to upward mobility in the service. It is also recommended that the hotels pay the workers competitively especially taking into account the labor laws on minimal wage pay for its workers. This will encourage the work to give their all in service delivery hence, hotel performance will improve. The hotels should develop management development programme's this will give an exposure experience for the managers to interact with other players in the industry ultimately increased performance.

**Conflicts of interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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