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EFFECT OF LEARNING CULTURE ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE OF FLOUR MILLING FIRMS IN MOMBASA COUNTY

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Abstract

Adoption of knowledge management in organization is challenged by lack of a coherent strategy that impede the effective transfer of insights across the organization. In addition, varying individual learning preferences and styles within diverse workforces pose difficulties in designing universally applicable learning initiatives. The emphasis has evolved significantly from focusing just on accumulating riches within the organization to a time where knowledge and learning within the business have grown increasingly vital and necessary to organizational survival and continued growth. The objective of the study was to determine how learning culture affects the employee performance of flour milling firms in Mombasa County. Experiential learning theory was used in this study to evaluate the variable. The study's methodology included a descriptive research design and target population was 145 middle level managers, and the sample size was 106 middle level managers of Grain Handlers Ltd, Mombasa Maize Millers and Kitui flour mills Ltd in Mombasa. Data was collected through a close ended questionnaire set on 1-5 Likert scale. A pilot test was carried out to assess research instrument's reliability and validity. Collected data was analysed using descriptive and inferential techniques. The study adopted a multiple regression Model. From the research findings learning culture had a positive impact on employee performance. The study concluded that knowledge management influences employee performance of flour milling firms in Mombasa County. The study recommended for encouraging of employees to pursue ongoing education and provide opportunities for professional development.

Keywords: *employee performance, knowledge management, learning culture*

Introduction

At the workplace, employee performance is acknowledged as job performance. It is regarded as being crucial to the success of the organization (Argote, Lee, & Park, 2021). To enhance employee performance, employers must make sure that workers finish their jobs on time in order to accomplish organizational objectives. The capacity of any individual to meet his or her objectives, as well as the requirements of their directors or the organizational objectives set by the top management, is a strong indicator of effective employee performance (Xie, 2019).

Knowledge management plays a pivotal role in influencing employee performance by fostering a dynamic and adaptive work environment. When an organization prioritizes continuous learning, employees are more likely to acquire new skills, stay abreast of industry developments, and adapt to changing circumstances (Haryono, Supardi & Udin, 2020). This proactive approach to learning enhances individual competencies, enabling employees to contribute more effectively to their roles. A culture of organizational learning promotes knowledge sharing and collaboration, fostering a sense of collective intelligence within the workforce (Hooi, 2021).

In the UK, flour milling firms have leveraged Knowledge Management Systems to enhance information sharing and reduce redundancy, leading to better decision-making processes. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), firms

implementing knowledge management systems experienced a 20% increase in productivity and a 15% reduction in operational errors (Steinmo & Rasmussen, 2018). In France, knowledge management systems adoption has significantly boosted collaborative efforts and streamlined operations within flour milling firms. The Institute national de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA) reported that companies utilizing knowledge management systems saw a 25% increase in collaborative projects and a 10% improvement in project completion times (Alipour, Idris & Karimi's, 2019).

In Nigeria, the integration of knowledge management systems in flour milling firms has led to significant improvements in employee performance. According to a report by the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (NACCIMA), firms that adopted knowledge management systems experienced a 25% increase in productivity and a 20% reduction in operational errors (Haryono, Supardi, & Udin, 2020). South African flour milling firms have seen notable enhancements in employee performance with the adoption of knowledge management systems. According to a study by the South African Chamber of Milling (SACM), firms implementing knowledge management systems reported a 30% improvement in workflow efficiency and a 15% increase in innovation rates (Xie, 2019).

The adoption of Knowledge Management Systems (knowledge management systems) in Kenyan flour milling firms has significantly enhanced employee performance, driven by improvements in productivity, decision-making, collaboration, and training. According to a report by the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM), firms that integrated knowledge management systems saw a 30% increase in productivity due to streamlined processes and reduced redundancy (Gachanja, Nga'nga & Kiganane, 2020). The Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) found that 40% of employees felt more confident in their decision-making abilities, thanks to better access to information. Collaborative tools within knowledge management systems have fostered a more cohesive work environment, leading to a 25% increase in innovative solutions, as reported by the Kenya Flour Millers Association (KFMA).

The implementation of knowledge management in organization is affected by a number of misconceptions that make many employees not realize their full performance (Hooi, 2021). According to Hendri (2019) managers treat knowledge retention as a concern for long-term planning which undermines employee performance as it undervalues the immediate benefits of preserving institutional knowledge, which can lead to informed decision-making and greater efficiency.

Since 2019, flour milling firms in Kenya have demonstrated robust performance growth, driven by technological advancements and increased adoption of Knowledge Management Systems (KMS). According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), the sector's output grew by an average of 5% annually from 2019 to 2023 (Tortorella, Vergara, Garza-Reyes, & Sawhney, 2020). Mombasa Maize Millers has an estimated daily milling capacity of around 1,500 metric tons, but actual output fluctuates (Gachanja, Nga'nga, & Kiganane, 2020). Flour milling firms have invested millions of money in adoption knowledge management systems, however, the effectiveness of the systems in optimizing resource allocation, streamlining operations, and improving decision-making processes was not clearly documented.

Exploring the empirical gap in the relationship between knowledge management (KM) and employee performance in flour milling firms in Kenya reveals a lack of sector-specific studies that address the unique challenges and dynamics of this industry. Most research in Kenya on KM and employee performance tends to be generalized, failing to account for the specific socio-economic, cultural, and operational factors pertinent to flour milling firms. This study

filled the information gap by providing an answer to the following question; what was the effect of learning culture on employee performance of flour milling firms in Mombasa County?

Objective

To establish the effect of learning culture on employee performance of flour milling firms in Mombasa County.

Research Hypothesis

HO_1: There is no significant influence of learning culture on employee performance of flour milling firms in Mombasa County.

Theoretical Framework

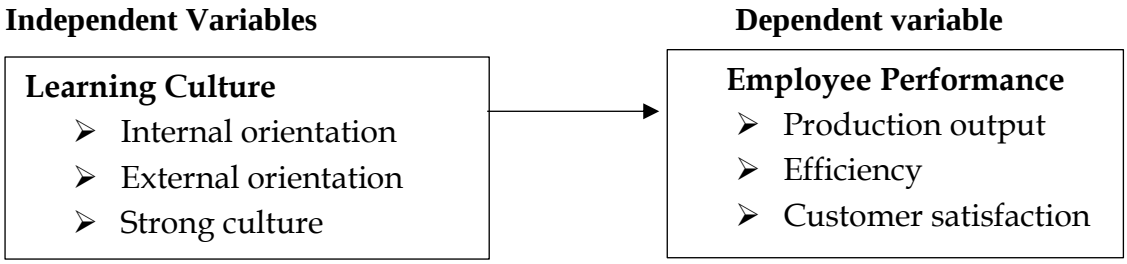
Experiential learning theory

The theory, which is attributed to Kolb from 1984, posits that an organization can effectively teach its managers utilizing the previously available resources. Kolb assumptions on experiential learning are founded on psychology and philosophy (Leithwood & Louis, 2021). Since its inception, the theory has had a significant impact on leadership, organizational development, and the concepts of learning organizations (Zhao, Jiang, Peng & Hong, 2021). According to Han, Yoon, Suh, Li, and Chae (2019), a four-stage learning cycle that combines concrete experience and abstract conceptualization results in learning when experience is grasped and transformed.

The lifespan of human development, from infancy to maturity, is covered by Kolb's theory, which includes choices on a career, education, problem-solving skills, and interpersonal relationships (Rawashdeh & Tamimi, 2020). Dialectic inquiry, which is founded on and limited to the information provided by human experience, is sparked by experience. The theory's tenets have a unique position in the study of management learning since it combines multiple epistemologies into a formal theory of learning. Because it focuses on the interactions between multiple learning components rather than a single one, experiential learning is unique (Asbari, Purwanto, Ong, Mustikasiwi, Maesaroh, Mustofa & Andriyani, 2020). Stated differently, learning occurs when various learning demands are consciously identified and met. Four interrelated activities action, cognition, reflection, and experience serve as stand-ins for the four elements necessary for comprehensive, integrated learning (Asbari et al., 2020).

According to Abubakar, Elrehail, Alatailat, and Elçi (2019), the theory has been criticized because it fails to appropriately account for the context of power interactions, which includes factors like social position, gender, and cultural dominance. Second, the assumptions behind the theory fail to adequately acknowledge how these power imbalances affect learning. Furthermore, the theory overemphasizes retroactive reflection while neglecting to emphasize the present moment of experience (Gatuyu & Kinyua, 2020). The notion holds that a learner's social and historical context are inextricably linked to their process of individual learning (Kordab, Raudelinien, & Meidut-Kavaliauskien, 2020).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Bishop (2020) examined how learning culture elements, when proactive personality and positive affect were taken into consideration, affected worker wellbeing and resilient behavior. Professionals from different organizations in Australia and New Zealand were given access to a single online self-report questionnaire. Even after controlling for individual characteristics, regression analysis on a sample of 189 professionals showed a high correlation between ongoing learning and workers' resilience and well-being. These results highlight the importance of opportunities for ongoing learning in improving worker wellbeing and encouraging resilient behavior.

Mbakaya and Muli (2019) aimed to determine the connection between small and medium firms' performance and their learning culture. The study employed a descriptive research approach and its target audience was technical permanent employees of HP Enterprises Ltd. and Infotech Africa Ltd. in Nairobi. Both quantitative and qualitative primary data were gathered through the use of a questionnaire. Both descriptive and inferential analytic results were shown using distribution tables, graphs, and pie charts. The results of the study show that organizational learning significantly affects the operational effectiveness of Kenyan IT companies; as a result, organizational learning should be used by all enterprises to boost productivity. The research recommended that the government set priorities, collaborate with other authorities, and create policies and programs that effectively support organizational learning in small and medium-sized businesses, especially for SMEs in the IT industry.

Research Methodology

The study used a descriptive research approach, which aims to gather information from people in a population to ascertain how that population is currently faring with regard to one or more variables. The target population for this study was 145 middle level managers. This study used a simple random sample process to ensure that each object has an equal probability of being selected for the study. Sample size was 106 middle level managers from Grain handlers, Mombasa Maize Millers and Kitui Flour. Cronbach's alpha was used to gauge internal reliability for tests with several possible outcomes and the validity of research instruments was evaluated in the study using the KMO and Bartlett test. Data collection tools included questionnaires designed to elicit answers from participants on nearly identical topics. The researcher sought approval from the institution and a letter of introduction was obtained from Technical University of Mombasa school of Business. Prior to the start of the data gathering procedure, the researcher also briefed the respondents. These permits boosted the response rate because responders felt more at ease providing accurate and worthwhile responses. Descriptive data was utilized to compute means, modes, percentages, and standard deviation. The correlation coefficient, ANOVA, model summary, and regression coefficient were all determined using inferential statistics.

The regression model adopted is as follows:

$\mathbf{Y} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1$
Y = Employee performance
$\mathbf{X}_1$= Learning culture
$\mathcal{E}$: Error term.

Results and Discussion

Diagnostic results

The tests were done to assess the accuracy, validity, and reliability of measurements, procedures, and statistical models employed in the study.

Normality test

The study used Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to examine the maximum difference between the cumulative distribution function (CDF) of the data and the CDF of the normal distribution.

Table 1: Normality Test

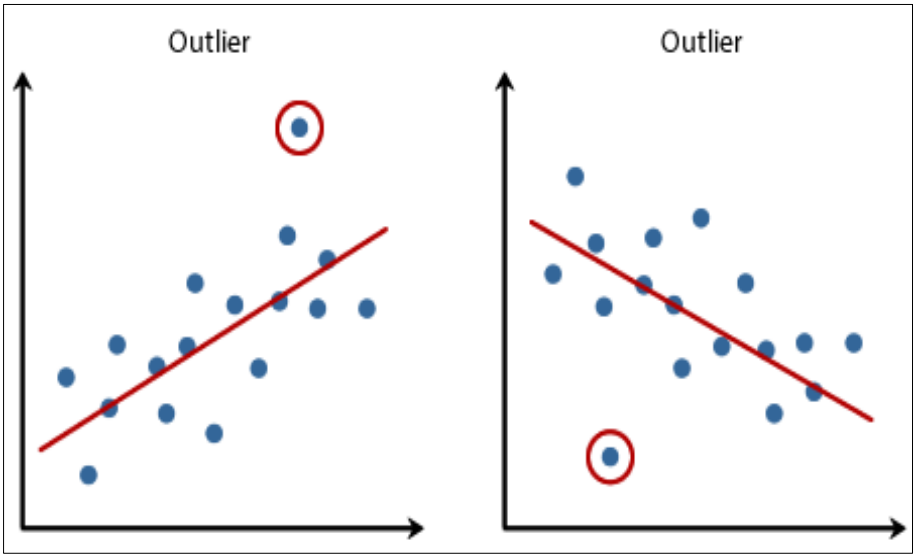
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Standardized Residual	.257	105	.062

As shown in table 1; the p-value obtained is less than 0.05, it shows that the sample distribution is normal suggesting that the data follows a normal distribution.

Linearity test results

The test was done through plotting of residual plots as shown in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Linearity Test Results



The results in the figure showed that there was no apparent pattern across the range of the DV thus indicating the constant variance assumption is met. From the figure above, the residual values were spread along the regression lines, hence the outliers do have a significant effect on the linearity of the regression model adopted.

Descriptive statistics

This section analyzed the study participant's responses relating to study variables.

Learning culture

Study participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree to statements relating to learning culture based on a likert scale of 1-5, the responses are as presented on Table 2:

Table 2: Learning Culture

Statement	Mean	Std.dev
All employees undergo information handling training before taking their full responsibilities	4.213	.784
Learning on the job is highly encouraged for communication development	3.981	1.271
Only experienced employees handle the communication role at the organization	3.213	.905
All employees undergo training from educational institutions to better understand their responsibilities	3.904	.875
The management provides financial support for seminars and short-courses	3.873	.923
Mentors play a key role in enhancing the competency of employee	3.633	1.09
The management has put in place a strong learning culture	3.778	.977
Individuals with less learning culture have less responsibilities in the firm	4.122	.866
Academic leaves are provided for local and international studies by employees	3.995	.987
Average	**3.8567**	

Source: Research Data (2024)

Based on an overall mean of 3.8567, study participants agreed that learning culture influences employee performance at flour milling firms in Mombasa County. In a related study, Bishop (2020) examined how learning culture elements, when proactive personality and positive affect were taken into consideration, affected worker wellbeing and resilient behavior. Regression analysis on a sample of 189 professionals showed a high correlation between ongoing learning and workers' resilience and well-being.

Employee performance

Study participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree to statements relating to employee performance based on a likert scale of 1-5, the responses are as presented in the Table 3:

Table 3: Employee Performance

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
Employee production output has increased	3.613	.8123
General production levels has greatly improved	3.712	.7652
Defects in units produced has greatly reduced	3.525	.7123
Employees have become more efficient at work	3.911	.8733
Wastage by employees in terms of resources has been reduced	3.718	.7993
Work processes have improved significantly	3.451	.8213
Customer satisfaction levels have greatly improved	3.762	.9782
Goods produced meet customer needs and expectations	3.720	.9034
Average	**3.677**	

Based on an overall mean of 3.677, study participants agreed that employee performance at flour milling firms in Mombasa County has greatly improved. In a related study, Thumbi, Hannah and Rosemarie (2020) demonstrated that knowledge acquisition and information dissemination were significantly positively correlated with employee performance and had a larger influence on the efficiency and service delivery performance characteristics of employees.

Pearson correlation analysis results

Correlation analysis was used to examine the strength and direction of the linear relationship between study variables. Findings are presented Table 4:

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Analysis Results

Variable		employee performance	Learning Culture
Employee performance	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Learning culture	Pearson Correlation	.713**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

Learning culture had a strong correlation with employee performance (r=.713, p<.022. The study observed a positive correlation between the study variable implying that knowledge management is a potential determinant of employee performance. In a related study, Djangone and El-Gayar (2021) investigated the effects of knowledge acquisition, sharing, and utilization on the performance of higher education organizations as well as the moderating influence that organizational culture had in the context of higher education institutions (HEIs).

Regression model analysis results

The study used a model summary that provided essential information about the model with an aim to understand its characteristics and capabilities.

Table 5: Regression Model Analysis Results

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.852[a]	0.681	.624	.473

The R-square in the model summary results showed that the variance explained by the set of independent variables in the model. The model summary results showed that the Variables in the model accounted for 68.1% of variance in employee performance.

Analysis of variance

Analysis of Variance, was used to determine whether the differences among the targeted groups was statistically significant or if they could have occurred by random chance.

Table 6: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	75.634	5	15.13	41.76	.018[b]
	Residual	28.622	79	.3623		
	Total	104.256	84			

The ANOVA results showed a significant F value (F= 41.76, p<.018). This was an indication that knowledge management and employee performance fitted well in multiple linear model with employee performance as the DV and knowledge management indicators as predictor variables.

Regression analysis

In regression analysis, the regression coefficient results showed the significance of learning culture in predicting employee performance by comparing the corresponding p-value of each regression coefficient with threshold value.

Table 7: Regression Analysis

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.411	.122		3.369	.019
	Learning Culture	.405	.077	.430	5.260	.007

Considering the whole regression results in which the model was found as a fit model and each predictor variable significant predictor of employee performance, the fitted model was therefore of the form.

$$\mathbf{Y} = .411 + .405LC + \varepsilon$$

From the table 4.16: 1 unit change in learning culture influences employee performance by .405 implied that learning culture played a critical role in enhancing employee performance, and employee performance continued to improve if learning culture was greatly improved.

Hypothesis results

The study used the p-values obtained in the regression analysis in making a decision as to whether there was enough statistical evidence to reject the adopted null hypothesis or accept the alternative hypothesis.

Table 7: Hypothesis Results

Null Hypotheses	Interpretation	Decision
H_{01}: There is no significant influence of learning culture on employee performance of milling firms in Mombasa County.	p-value .007 ≤ 0.05	Reject

The results imply that learning culture does, in fact, play a crucial role in enhancing employee performance. The findings proved that investing in continuous learning, training, and knowledge-sharing initiatives led to improved productivity, innovation, and job satisfaction among employees. Milling firms placed greater emphasis on creating a robust learning environment, recognizing that such efforts contributed to long-term performance improvements and competitive advantage in the industry.

Discussion

The objective of the study was to establish the effect of learning culture on employee performance of milling firms in Mombasa County. Based on an overall mean of 3.8567, study participants agreed that learning culture influences employee performance at flour milling firms in Mombasa County. Correlation analysis revealed that learning culture had the strongest correlation with employee performance at (r=.739, p<.010). Lastly, regression analysis revealed that learning culture has a positive impact on employee performance (β=.405, p=0.07), therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis adopted. In a related study, Bishop (2020) examined how learning culture elements, when proactive personality and positive affect were taken into consideration, affected worker wellbeing and resilient behavior. Regression analysis on a sample of 189 professionals showed a high correlation between ongoing learning and workers' resilience and well-being.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Study participants moderately agreed that learning culture influences employee performance at flour milling firms in Mombasa County. Correlation analysis revealed that learning culture had the strongest correlation with employee performance. Lastly, regression analysis revealed that learning culture has a positive impact on employee performance. In a related study, Bishop (2020) examined how learning culture elements, when proactive personality and positive affect were taken into consideration, affected worker wellbeing and resilient behavior. Regression analysis showed a high correlation between ongoing learning and workers' resilience and well-

being. Based on these findings, it is concluded that organizational learning influences employee performance of milling firms in Mombasa County. Study revealed that learning culture had the strongest influence on employee performance of milling firms in Mombasa County.

Recommendation

Promoting a culture of continuous learning is crucial for sustained knowledge improvement. Flour milling firms should encourage employees to pursue ongoing education and provide opportunities for professional development. This can be supported through funding for courses, offering in-house training programs, and recognizing and rewarding learning achievements. Managers should create environments where curiosity and experimentation are valued can drive innovation and knowledge growth.

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