

EFFECT OF UPSKILLING ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN LAIKIPIA COUNTY

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Abstract

Employee performance is a critical component of the success and effectiveness of community-based organizations in Laikipia County, Kenya. However, there are several challenges that hinder optimal performance in these organizations. One significant issue affecting employee performance is the limited access to training and development opportunities hence the need to conduct a study on the effect of upskilling on employee performance in community-based organizations in Laikipia County, Kenya. The study was informed by human capital theory. This study adopted an exploratory research design. The unit of analysis was six community-based organizations in Laikipia County. The unit of observation was 151 employees working with the six community-based organizations in Laikipia County. The sample size was 110 respondents drawn from the six organizations calculated using Taro Yamane. Data was collected using questionnaires. A pilot study was conducted to test the data collection instruments for their validity and reliability. From the findings the Cronbach Alpha was between 0.7-1 implying that the research instrument was reliable. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that there is a moderate positive and statistically significant correlation between upskilling and employee performance in community-based organizations in Laikipia County, ($r=0.543$; $p<0.05$). From the findings, the study recommended that training programs should address specific challenges faced by these organizations. Moreover, community-based organizations should design comprehensive training programs that expose employees to various aspects of community-based work. To enhance the impact of upskilling on employee performance it is recommended that CBOs should tailor training programs to address specific challenges faced by these organizations.

Key Words: *Community-Based Organizations, Covid-19 Pandemic, Employee Performance, Upskilling.*

Introduction

The performance of employees directly impacts the quality and effectiveness of services provided by CBOs to the community. When employees perform at a high level, they are more likely to deliver services efficiently, accurately, and with a greater focus on meeting the needs of the community (McGrath, Arrow & Berdahl, 2018). Employee performance plays a key role in improving the overall effectiveness of CBOs. When employees consistently perform well, they contribute to the organization's ability to achieve its mission, goals, and objectives, thereby enhancing the overall performance and impact of the organization (Cherry *et al.*, 2019). Measuring employee performance in community-based organizations (CBOs) is crucial for assessing individual contributions, identifying areas for improvement, and aligning performance with organizational goals, (Mendes, Santos, & Ribeiro, 2019). Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are specific metrics used to evaluate individual

performance in relation to organizational objectives. Examples of KPIs in CBOs may include the number of clients served, funds raised, volunteer hours contributed, or community impact achieved.

According to a study by Huynh and Tripathy (2021), 78% of nonprofit organizations used KPIs to measure employee performance. 360-Degree Feedback method involves collecting feedback from multiple sources, including supervisors, peers, subordinates, and even external stakeholders, to gain a comprehensive view of an employee's performance. A study by Ronesh and Kumar (2019) found that 71% of surveyed organizations used 360-degree feedback for performance evaluation. According to a survey conducted by PwC, 77% of CEOs in the United States (U.S.) are concerned about the availability of key skills in their workforce. To combat this, the American Workforce Policy Advisory Board aims to promote job training and apprenticeship programs, with a goal of enabling workers to gain in-demand skills. Additionally, the National Council for the American Worker has committed to training over 6 million workers through private-sector commitments, (International Labour Organization, 2020).

Singapore has placed a strong emphasis on skills development to remain competitive in the global market. The Skills Future movement, launched in 2015, aims to encourage lifelong learning among Singaporeans. As of 2020, more than 500,000 individuals have utilized their Skills Future Credit, a government-provided credit that can be used to upskill or reskill. In response to COVID-19, the SG United Jobs and Skills Package was introduced, targeting to create 100,000 opportunities for job seekers and offering enhanced training subsidies for sectors affected by the pandemic, (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Skills development is crucial for South Africa's economic growth and addressing unemployment challenges. The South African government introduced the National Skills Development Strategy in 2011, aiming to bridge the gap between education and industry needs, (Ampah, & Duku, 2020). According to the Department of Higher Education and Training, more than 3.3 million people have participated in learner-ships, apprenticeships, and skills programs under the strategy. Additionally, efforts are being made to promote digital skills, with the goal of training 1 million young people in digital literacy by 2023, (Chataika, & Meyer 2021).

Rwanda has recognized skills development as a vital driver of economic transformation. The government's Vision 2020 places a strong emphasis on TVET to enhance employability and entrepreneurship, (Heneveld, & Yoshida, 2020). Rwanda's TVET system includes vocational schools, polytechnics, and on-the-job training programs. The government has also partnered with international organizations and the private sector to establish specialized training centers in sectors such as tourism, construction, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These initiatives have resulted in increased enrollment in TVET institutions and improved access to skills training across the country, (Inanga, 2021).

Kenya has undertaken significant measures to enhance skill development within the country. The government's steadfast commitment to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has played a pivotal role in addressing the evolving needs of the workforce. Kigongo and Kanyenze (2021) emphasize that Kenya boasts over 200 TVET institutions, spanning sectors such as engineering, hospitality, and information technology. Recognizing the importance of aligning education with market demands, the government has collaborated closely with industry stakeholders to design curricula that foster practical skills and enhance employability for TVET graduates. Post-COVID-19, Kenya has intensified its efforts in digital transformation within education, responding to the increased importance of digital literacy skills. This involves incorporating digital technologies into learning environments to ensure individuals are well-equipped for the demands of the modern workforce, (Kouadio & Ofori 2021). Additionally, reskilling and upskilling programs may have been a focal point, addressing shifts in the job market and empowering individuals to adapt to new skill requirements.

Flexible learning platforms have likely gained prominence, with Kenya investing in online education and other adaptable models to make learning more accessible. Collaboration between educational institutions and industries remains crucial, and the country may have strengthened partnerships to ensure that educational programs align closely with the dynamic needs of various industries, (Kigongo & Kanyenze, 2021). Government support and policies play a critical role in skill development, and Kenya may have implemented initiatives to encourage businesses to actively participate in training and hiring endeavors. Furthermore, addressing youth unemployment through targeted employment programs and fostering entrepreneurship and innovation could be key aspects of Kenya's post-COVID-19 skill development strategy, (Kouadio & Ofori 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted global economies and labour markets, posing unprecedented challenges to CBOs worldwide. In the wake of the pandemic, CBOs in various regions, including Laikipia County, Kenya, were grappling with the urgent need to adapt to new operating conditions and enhance employee performance to sustain their vital roles in local communities. The Covid-19 pandemic caused disruptions that resulted substantial changes in how organizations conduct their operations. For example, 80% of CBO staff reported increased demand for their services. At the same time 88% of CBOs increased their online presence according to Javan (2023).

The World Bank (2021) argues that without adequate training, employees may struggle to adapt to changing community needs of their communities. Consequently, their ability to deliver the desired outcomes would be impaired. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with the demanding nature of community development work led to employees feeling overburdened and unable to meet expectations. This adversely affected their motivation, job satisfaction, and ultimately their performance. As a result, 55% and 52% of community-based organizations reported that they were under increased pressure to invest in skills development and hire new staff respectively to fill skills

gaps (Javan, 2023). These initiatives are supposed to facilitate adjustment to the new operating environment and remain effective in delivering on their mandate.

The disruption caused by the pandemic has underscored the critical importance of skills development in equipping employees with the competencies needed to navigate evolving challenges and contribute effectively to organizational objectives. However, there remains a gap in understanding the specific impact of skills development initiatives on employee performance within the context of CBOs post-COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the recognized significance of skills development, empirical evidence linking such interventions to tangible improvements in employee performance within community-based organizations is limited. The lack of comprehensive research addressing this issue hinders the ability of CBOs and policymakers to formulate evidence-based strategies for workforce development and organizational resilience. Therefore, there is a pressing need for empirical research to investigate the effect of skills development in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era employee performance in community-based organizations, particularly in the unique socio-economic context of Laikipia County, Kenya.

Hypothesis of the Study

H0₁: There is no statistically significant influence of cross skilling on employee performance in community-based organizations in Laikipia County.

Research Methodology

This study adopted an exploratory research design. The unit of analysis was six community-based organizations in Laikipia County. The unit of observation was 151 employees working with the six community-based organizations in Laikipia County. The sample size was 110 respondents drawn from the six organizations calculated using the formula developed by Taro Yamane. Data was collected using questionnaires. A pilot study was conducted to test the data collection instruments for their validity and reliability. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. After analysis data was presented in form of a tables.

Results and Discussion

Upskilling and Employee Performance

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on the effect of upskilling on employee performance in community-based organizations in Laikipia County. The findings were as indicated in Table 1

Table 1: Upskilling and Employee Performance

		SA	A	N	D	SD		
Upskilling	N	%	%	%	%	%	Mean	Std

Proficiency in use of digital tools enable employees to leverage innovation in problem-solving which enhance employee productivity	100	31	49	14	6	0	4.0320	.84181
Technological skills enhance employee efficiency when applying their expertise	100	40	45	11	4	0	4.1760	.84304
Cognitive analytical skills help employee identify issues, propose innovative solutions, and make informed decisions based on evidence and logical reasoning	100	41	39	18	2	0	4.1840	.80707
Strong decision-making skills enable employees to make timely and well-informed decisions, considering available information, risks, and potential impacts	100	48	32	13	7	0	4.0480	1.10611
Organizations that prioritize upskilling demonstrate a commitment to their employee career advancement and create an environment conducive to personal and professional growth	100	46	44	8	1	0	4.2560	.89716
Overall mean and the STD							4.1392	.8990

From the finding, 31% of the respondents strongly agreed that proficiency in use of digital tools enable employees to leverage innovation in problem-solving which enhance employee productivity, 49% agreed, 14% were neutral, 6% disagreed that proficiency in use of digital tools enable employees to leverage innovation in problem-solving which enhance employee productivity with a mean of 4.0320 and Std. Deviation of .84181. From the finding, 40% of the respondents strongly agreed that technological skills enhance employee efficiency when applying their expertise, 45% agreed, 11% were neutral while 4% disagreed that technological skills enhance employee efficiency when applying their expertise with a mean of 4.1760 and Std. Deviation of .84304. The study findings are in line with the findings of Wang and Fang (2018) who found that technological skills enabled employees to effectively use digital communication and collaboration tools, facilitating seamless interaction and information sharing within the organization. Proficiency in video conferencing and virtual collaboration tools allows for efficient communication among team members, even when they are geographically dispersed.

From the finding, 41% of the respondents strongly agreed that cognitive analytical skills help employee identify issues, propose innovative solutions, and make informed decisions based on evidence and logical reasoning, 39% agreed, 18% were neutral while 2% disagreed that cognitive analytical skills help employee identify issues, propose innovative solutions, and make informed decisions based on evidence and logical reasoning with a mean of 4.1840 and Std. Deviation of .80707. From the finding, 48% of the respondents strongly agreed that strong decision-making skills enable employees to make timely and well-informed decisions, taking into account available information, risks, and potential impacts, 32% agreed, 13% were neutral, while 7% disagreed that strong decision-making skills enable employees to make timely and well-informed decisions, taking into account available information,

risks, and potential impacts with a mean of 4.0480 and Std. Deviation of 1.10611. The study findings agreed with those of Garcia and Lopez (202) who found that strong decision-making skills involve evaluating risks. Employees with upskilled capabilities can better assess risks associated with various community initiatives and make informed choices.

From the finding, 46% of the respondents strongly agreed that organizations that prioritize upskilling demonstrate a commitment to their employee career advancement and create an environment conducive to personal and professional growth, 44% agreed, 8% were neutral while 1% disagreed that organizations that prioritize upskilling demonstrate a commitment to their employee career advancement and create an environment conducive to personal and professional growth, with a mean of 4.2560 and Std. Deviation of .89716. The overall mean was 4.1392 and Standard Deviation of 0.8990. This implies that upskilling enhances employee performance in community-based organizations in Laikipia County to a great extent.

The study findings align closely with the research conducted by Dubois and Tremblay (2022), emphasizing that organizations placing a priority on upskilling are actively investing in the professional development of their employees. This strategic commitment not only reflects a financial investment but, more importantly, cultivates a robust culture of continuous learning and improvement within the organizational framework. Such a commitment signifies a broader recognition that the development and enhancement of employee skills and knowledge contribute significantly to the organization's overall growth, adaptability, and long-term success.

Employee Performance

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on employee performance in community-based organizations in Laikipia County. The findings were as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Employee Performance

	N	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean	Std
Majority of employees have been able to adapt to the changing circumstances at work as a result of skills development interventions	100	53	47	0	0	0	4.5920	.87709
Skills development activities instituted at workplace increase employee’s ability to achieve set targets at work	100	52	48	0	0	0	4.5960	.83689
Skills development interventions has increased the number of people that employee can serve effectively	100	49	51	0	0	0	4.5440	.85293
Participation in skills development activities increased employee ability to achieved the desired results from their work	100	47	53	0	0	0	4.4480	1.02277

Skills development activities increased employees' ability to deliver expected results as required	100	45	55	0	0	0	4.4000	.92457
My work output is better aligned and contributes to the achievement of the realization of the mission and vision of my organization	100	42	58	0	0	0	4.5120	.93512
Through skills development initiatives employees are able to implement their work within the budget	100	49	51	0	0	0	4.5360	.98982
I complete my work assignments on time as a result of skills development interventions	100	42	58	0	0	0	4.5520	.92506
Skills development help employees reduce wastage of resources including time, material, money at work	100	46	54	0	0	0	4.5880	.74937
As a result of skills development interventions employees are able to deliver services that meet the expectations of the community	100	42	58	0	0	0	4.4880	.72974
Overall mean and the STD							4.5256	.8843

From the findings, 53% of the respondents strongly agreed that majority of employees have been able to adapt to the changing circumstances at work as a result of skills development interventions while 47% agreed that majority of employees have been able to adapt to the changing circumstances at work as a result of skills development interventions with a mean of 4.5920 and Std. Deviation of .87709. From the findings, 52% of the respondents strongly agreed that skills development activities instituted at workplace increase employee's ability to achieve set targets at work while 48% agreed that skills development activities instituted at workplace increase employee's ability to achieve set targets at work with a mean of 4.5960 and Std. Deviation of .83689. The study findings are in tandem with those of Cherry, Colombo and Arnold (2019) which noted that skills development activities tailored to the specific needs of a CBO can enhance the competencies of employees, making them more effective in their roles. Employees who participate in relevant training programs are better equipped to carry out their responsibilities, leading to increased efficiency, effectiveness, and the ability to achieve desired outcomes.

From the finding, 49% of the respondents strongly agreed that skills development interventions have increased the number of people that employee can serve effectively while 51% agreed that skills development interventions has increased the number of people that employee can serve effectively with a mean of 4.5440 and Std. Deviation of .85293. In addition, the finding, 47% of the respondents strongly agreed that participation in skills development activities increased employee ability to achieve the desired results from their work while 53% agreed that participation in skills development activities increased employee ability to achieve the desired results from their work with a mean of 4.4480 and Std. Deviation of 1.02277. The study also agrees with the findings of Tims, Bakker and Xanthopoulou (2018) which found that training initiatives that emphasize the mission and vision help employees see

the broader purpose of their work, resulting in a more focused and aligned effort toward organizational goals. Skills development activities can foster a shared organizational culture, ensuring that the work output reflects the principles and values of the CBO.

In addition, the finding, 45% of the respondents strongly agreed that skills development activities increased employee ability to deliver expected results as required while 55% agreed that new technologies and working processes have reduced errors at work with a mean of 4.4000 and Std. Deviation of .92457. In addition, the finding 42% of the respondents strongly agreed that their work output is better aligned and contributes to the achievement of the realization of the mission and vision of my organization while 58% agreed that their work output is better aligned and contributes to the achievement of the realization of the mission and vision of my organization with a mean of 4.5120 and Std. Deviation of .93512. The study further is in line with the findings of Mjoli and Sosibo, (2021) who noted that training in effective communication and community engagement ensures that employees can interact with and respond to community members in a way that meets their expectations. When employees possess the necessary skills, they are more likely to deliver high-quality services that align with the diverse expectations and requirements of the community.

In addition, the finding, 49% of the respondents strongly agreed that through skills development initiatives employees are able to implement their work within the budget while 51% agreed that through skills development initiatives employees are able to implement their work within the budget with a mean of 4.5360 and Std. Deviation of .98982. Moreover, 42% of the respondents strongly agreed that they completed their work assignments on time as a result of skills development interventions while 58% agreed that they completed their work assignments on time as a result of skills development interventions with a mean of 4.5520 and Std. Deviation of .92506.

Moreover, 46% of the respondents strongly agreed that skills development help employees reduce wastage of resources including time, material, and money at work while 54% agreed that skills development help employees reduce wastage of resources including time, material, money at work with a mean of 4.5880 and Std. Deviation of .74937. Moreover 42% of the respondents strongly agreed that as a result of skills development interventions employees are able to deliver services that meet the expectations of the community while 58% agreed that as a result of skills development interventions employees are able to deliver services that meet the expectations of the community with a mean of 4.4880 and Std. Deviation of .72974. The overall mean was 4.5256 and Standard Deviation of 0.8843. This implies that skills development in Post COVID-19 Pandemic enhances employee performance in community-based organizations in Laikipia County to a very great extent. The study is in line with the findings of Kobia and Jowi (2021) which found that when employees possess the necessary skills, they are more likely to deliver high-quality services that align with the diverse expectations and requirements of the community.

Correlation Analysis

The study sought to establish the correlation between upskilling and employee performance in community-based organizations in Laikipia County. The findings of the study are as shown in Table 3

Table 3: Upskilling on Employee Performance

Upskilling	Employee Performance
Pearson Correlation	.441*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.006
N	95

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As indicated in Table 4.14, the study indicates that there was a positive and statistically significant correlation between effect of budgetary monitoring and budget absorption in the County Government of Nakuru, ($r = 0.441$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that better budgetary monitoring enhances budget absorption in the County Government of Nakuru. The findings are in line with the findings of Keng'ara and Makina (2020) who found a positive and significant relationship between the budgetary processes, including intense budgetary planning, control, implementation and evaluation, and organizational performance. Moreover, Nambajimana (2015) also found that there is a significant relationship between budget and control and performance, where budget and control is positively related to planning performance, the current ratio is positively and significantly related to performance, budget and control is positively and significantly related to monitoring and evaluation, and the relationship between working capital/liquidity is positively and significantly related to return on assets.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The hypothesis indicated that there is no statistically significant effect of upskilling on employee performance in community-based organizations in Laikipia County. From the findings the sig value was $0.013 < 0.05$ which is less than 0.05 therefore based on coefficient rule the first null hypothesis was rejected and study concluded that upskilling has a statistically significant effect on employee performance in community-based organizations in Laikipia County.

Based on the findings the study concluded that strong decision-making skills enable employees to make timely and well-informed decisions, considering available information, risks, and potential impacts. The study further concluded that organizations that prioritize upskilling demonstrate a commitment to their employee career advancement and create an environment conducive to personal and professional growth. This not only improves problem-solving capabilities but also contributes to the overall effectiveness of the organization in achieving its mission. Beyond individual development, upskilling initiatives create a positive work environment, increasing employee engagement and job satisfaction.

To enhance the impact of upskilling on employee performance it is recommended that CBOs should tailor training programs to address specific challenges faced by these organizations. Collaborative efforts with local educational institutions or training providers can ensure that the upskilling initiatives align with the unique needs of the community. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to regularly assess the application of newly acquired skills in real-world scenarios, ensuring that employees can effectively translate their enhanced competencies into tangible contributions to community development.

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