

## **THE INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEE RELATIONS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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### **Abstract**

*Worldwide, the environment of higher education is facing relentless and rapid change. These circumstances underscore the crucial role of leadership and management in maintaining morale, enhancing productivity, and helping staff at all institutional levels cope with momentous and rapid change. The Human Resource Management practices are meant to streamline efficiency and effectiveness of work in all organizations/institutions. The study aimed at establishing the influence of Employee relations as an HRM Practice on employee performance in selected public universities in Kenya. Descriptive survey research design was employed which allows the researcher achieve greater control of the study and to improve the validity of the study by examining the research problem. The target population included all the HR workers in selected public universities with a sample of 125 HR employees. Structured questionnaire was used as the main primary data collection instrument while secondary data was obtained from literature developed by scholars. The instrument was tested for validity and reliability before it was used for data collection. The data collected was filtered, coded and analysed (descriptive and inferential statistics) using SPSS. A regression model was used to establish the relevant relationships. The findings of the study showed that most of the respondents were not sure that recruitment and selection as an HRM practice has contributed to employee performance in public universities in Kenya. The findings also showed that most of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that employee training has contributed to employee performance in public universities in Kenya. It was also established that most respondents strongly agreed or agreed that good compensation and reward have contributed to employee performance, a while a good number of respondents strongly led to good performance in public universities. Therefore, the study concluded that employee performance is influenced by proper*

*and organized HRM Practices like recruitment and selection, employee training, compensation and reward and employee relations. The study recommends that public universities should adhere all the guidelines stipulated in the HRM Practices to enhance employee performance and productivity.*

*Keywords: Employee Relations, Human resource management practices, Public universities, performance, Employees*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Firms have faced an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing environment characterized by a diverse labour market, advancement in information technologies, globalization, deregulation, continuous customer demands. To be successful, a firm must be able to improve performance by reducing costs, creating new products and processes, enhancing quality and productivity, and increasing speed to market (Luthans & Sommers, 2005). In this regard, organizations need to focus on the capabilities of their workforces.

According to Morrison (1996), how an organization manages its human resources establishes the tone and conditions of the employee-employer relationship. HRM involves the policies and practices for dealing with management's Human Resource (HR) aspects (Dessler, 2007). HRM is composed of policies, practices and systems influencing and affecting the behaviour, attitude and performance of employees in an organization (Gerhart, *et al.*, 2007). Strategic approach of HRM is used for acquiring, developing, motivating, managing and gaining the employee's dedication and organization's key resources (Ahmed, 1999). HRM concept is considered by some as the personnel management and by some as an approach for personnel management integration involving organization strategy (Storey, 1995). The employees are more committed to their work and they play their extra role for the benefit of organization.

According to Guest (2002) the impact of HR practices on performance of employees is also related to the response of employee towards HR practices because employees have their own perception regarding them. Shehzad *et.al.* (2008) explains that there are a number of HR practices which are related to employee performance. Teseema & Soeters (2006) discussed eight HR practices which include recruitment and selection practices, placement practices, training practices, promotion practices, grievance procedure and pension or social security.

Ethical issues have increased for managers and organizations, and reputation can help or hurt a firm 's recruitment and retention (Vickers, 2005). Changes in laws mean that HRM practitioners must work to keep up (Adler, 2003). HRM practitioners are under pressure to show

how they add value to the firm (Adler, 2003). Some suggest that this can occur through increased employee abilities and increased organizational capabilities (Losey, Meisinger, & Ulrich, 2005). However, traditional HRM activities such as recruiting and career planning are devolving to line managers (Perry & Kulik, 2008), and the impact of HRM is increased for those HRM managers who collaborate with line managers (Losey, Meisinger, & Ulrich, 2005).

Human Resource Management attributes that the meaning employees attach to HRM practices vary depending on employees' interpretations of an employer's underlying motivation (Nishii et al., 2008). Employees respond positively if they believe that the employer is willing to implement HRM practices, but are less likely to exhibit positive behaviours if they perceive that the adoption of HRM practices is mostly a response to external forces. Kim and Wright (2011) employ Nishii et al.'s reasoning to propose that employees are more likely to believe that the adoption of HRM practices by firms is voluntary in a loosely regulated context where legal institutions do not severely restrict managerial autonomy.

Employees are more likely to interpret supportive HRM practices as a favour from their firms and tend to feel obligated to reciprocate the firm's favour by engaging in discretionary behaviours such as cooperation with co-workers. In a sample including different industries which Boselie, Paauwe, and Richardson (2003), show that HRM practices are more effective in a less-institutionalized sector than its more-institutionalized counterpart. Industrial regulation refers to constraints prescribed by the governmental policies on organizations.

Industrial regulations posed by governments include industry access control, new investment ratification, progress and pattern control of privatization or decentralization, and government involvement in business activities (Luo, 2003). Because governments may use regulations to strategically restrict vital industries, regulations can protect firms by creating barriers to new entry. Firms in a regulated environment often experience dependence on regulators who act as powerful constraints on existing business (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987). In our society, within which public universities exist, certain professions and occupations perform work activity of such a nature that if it is carried on in a negligent or fraudulent way, it can be dangerous to the public or contrary to the public interest. As a result, it has been the accepted practice to regulate the activities of groups such as doctors and nurses, engineers and lawyers, real estate and insurance brokers, carpenters and electricians and many other professions. Self-regulation is a privilege delegated to a professional or occupational group by the Legislature only when it is clear that the public can best be served by regulating the profession or occupation (Casey 2005).

The purpose of Professional Regulation is to assure the quality of professional services in the public interest. The regulation of a profession involves the setting of standards of

professional qualifications and practice; the keeping of a Register of qualified persons and the award of titles; determining the conduct of registrants, the investigation of complaints and disciplinary sanctions for professional misconduct. There is considerable public concern when professional practice falls short of expected standards or is judged not to be in the public interest (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005).

There is an increasing public expectation that a professional should be competent to current standards. The public must have confidence in professionals to follow a Code of Conduct, maintain their competence and only undertake professional tasks for which they are competent. The professional standing of HRM has been on the spotlight worldwide. An example of this is the formalization of professional human resource management standards in countries like Canada and Germany. In South Africa, the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) drafted the Human Resource Professions Bill in 2004 and revised it in 2006. It initiated much discussion about the merits of regulating the human resource (HR) profession.

One of the key points raised in these debates is whether one can regard HR management as a profession. Losey (1997) stated that human resource management is a profession. Ulrich and Eichinger (1998) maintained that HR must become more professional. Numerous researchers in the HR field (Losey, Meisinger & Ulrich, 2005) and various institutions (Harvard, Cornell & the American Business Association) use the term 'HR professionals' in their writings.

### **Human Resource Management Practices**

Human resource management practices are concerned with the human side of the management of the organization. The purpose is to ensure that the employees of a company are used in such a way that the employer obtains the greatest possible benefit from the abilities and the employees obtain both material and psychological rewards from their work (Graham & Bennett 1998). Human resource management practices are sometimes referred to as a "soft" management skill, effective practice within an organization which requires a strategic focus to ensure that people resources facilitate the achievement of organizational goals. HRM is a specialist function of management which has the prime responsibility for the following: formulating, proposing and gaining acceptance for the personnel policies and strategies of the organization; advising and guiding the organizations managers on the implementation of personnel policies and strategies; providing personnel services for the organization to facilitate the recruitment, motivation and development of sufficient and suitable employees at all levels; advising the organizations managers of the human consequences of change. There are several elements that constitute HRM practices. They include: Recruitment and selection,

Compensation and reward systems, training & development and employee relations (Cole 2004). As the globalization of world markets continues apace, comparative human resource management issues appear to be gaining momentum.

Both practitioners and academics in the field of human resource management are increasingly aware of the need to examine and understand the human resource management systems suitable to different sectors of the economy. They are interested in finding relevant human resource management policies and practices for different types of organizations, for example, public/private sector, manufacturing/service sector. Human resource management practices are central to improve the quality of services offered by organizations.

In the words of Pfeffer (1994), having good human resource management is likely to generate much loyalty, commitment or willingness to expend extra effort for the organizations' objectives". Moreover, Stone (1998) remarks that „human resource management is either part of the problem or part of the solution in gaining the productive contribution of people. The above quotes suggest that organizations need to effectively manage their human resources if they are to get maximum contribution of their employees and in turn return on their investment. Organizations in general face continuous challenges ranging from heightened national consciousness, employment and labour law requirements not to mention the need to ensure maximum utilization of their resources to their own advantage, a necessity for organizational survival. Since both indigenous and foreign companies operate in the same competitive and volatile environment in Kenya both are bound to readjust their management practices to boost their performance.

The current disposition of HRM is largely associated with the drastic expansion of businesses globally, technological innovations and fierce competition that characterizes the environment in which businesses operate today and the Kenyan business environment is no exception to this global development. In Kenya, the Human Resource Management Professionals Act (2012) was enacted in January, 2013 and it required that all human resource practitioners in Kenya be certified for them to practice.

According to the Kenya Gazette notice of March 2013, Human resource managers now need a practicing certificate to work in the sector. The Act, which received the President's assent on December 31, 2012, is expected to govern the entry and conduct of professionals in the management of human resource practices. The law also provides for disciplinary measures that HR professionals will be subjected to if they fail to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Under the Act, the Institute of Human Resource Management (IHRM) is required to register HR professionals and maintain high governance standards within the profession. The act also established the Human Resource Management Professionals Examinations Board,

which is tasked with drawing-up a curriculum, and setting and administering examinations for HR practitioners. The Board will thereafter issue professional qualifying certificates and other awards to candidates who satisfy examination requirements. It will also make and enforce rules pertaining to the examinations. According to the Institute of Human Resource Management (IHRM), a professional member's organization, has estimated that about half of Kenya's practicing HR officers do not have the relevant academic training.

The government since has embarked on facilitating the additional training necessary for certification for civil servants currently working as human resource officers. This is being done by awarding scholarships and setting up of the training revolving fund where study loans can be accessed. Since the enactment of Human Resource Management Professionals Act (2012) in January, 2013, HR managers are expected to align their functions with this act. Despite the fact that the act was enacted in the last four years, its impact is yet to be felt in the HRM practices. It is therefore a step in the right direction to view HRM practices in the Kenyan public universities and how they impact employee performance.

### **Concept of Employee Performance**

Individual work performance is an issue that has not only bothered companies all over the world but also fuelled a great deal of researching in the fields of management, occupational health, work and organizational psychology. Numerous studies on individual work performance have been conducted. However, different approaches of studying individual work performance circulate in today's literature. Whereas the field of management has primarily occupied itself with how one can make an employee as productive as possible, Work and organizational psychologists, on the other hand, have an interest in the influence of determinants, such as work engagement, job satisfaction, and personality, on individual work performance. Performance is associated with quantity of output, quality of output, timeliness of output, presence or attendance on the job, efficiency of the work completed and effectiveness of work completed (Mathis & Jackson 2009). According to Mooney (2009) performance is not only related to results but it also relates with activities and behaviours of employees that they adopted to achieve their given goals. The traditional view that employees were regarded as a cost to the organization has been sharply contrasted to a fresh approach to human capital by Poisat (2006). He argues that there exists compelling evidence why organizations need to engage their employees in order to improve their performance and hence significantly contribute to the organization's bottom line.

According to Van Dyk and Herholdt (2004) disputed the organizations claim that people are their greatest asset, and is convinced that, even though possibly subconsciously, the belief

still exists that people need the organization more than it needs them. He argues that in fact, organizations and institutions have to market membership as much as, and perhaps more than, products and services. They asserted that institutions should attract people, retain people, recognize and reward people, motivate people, serve and satisfy people. Additionally, they argue that Performance is about behaviour or what employees do, not about what employees produce or the outcomes of their work. Perceived employee performance represents the general belief of the employee about his behaviour and contributions in the success of organization.

Employee performance may be taken in the perspective of three factors which makes possible to perform better than others, determinants of performance may be such as declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and motivation (McCloy et al., 1994). Human Resource practices have positive impact on performance of individuals. Huselid (1995) argued that the effectiveness the HR practitioners will transfer on the behaviour of employees, which also proves a positive association. Teseema and Soeters (2006) have carried out study on eight HR practices including recruitment and selection practices, placement practices, training, compensation, employee performance evaluation, promotion, grievance procedure and pension or social security in relation with the perceived performance of employees. They concluded that these HR practices have positive and significant associations with the perceived performance of employees.

Employee satisfaction and retention have always been important issues for organizations and institutions of learning. High levels of absenteeism and staff turnover can affect the bottom line of the organization, as temps, recruitment and retraining take their toll. The term Employee Satisfaction refers to an individual's general attitude toward his or her job. A person with a high level of job satisfaction holds positive attitudes toward the job and tends to be more productive, creative and committed to their employers while a person who is dissatisfied with his or her job tends to hold negative attitudes about the job. Organizations that can create work environments that attract, motivate and retain hard-working individuals will be better positioned to succeed in a competitive environment that demands quality and cost-efficiency (Gibss, 2000).

According to Huselid (1995) recruitment procedures that provide a large pool of qualified applicants, paired with a reliable and valid selection regime, will have a substantial influence over the quality and type of skills new employees possess. An organization's human resource policies and practices represent important forces for shaping employee behaviour and attitudes. The selection practices will determine who is hired. If properly designed, it will identify competent candidates and accurately match them to the job. The use of the proper selection

device will increase the probability that the right person is chosen to fill a slot. When the best people are selected for the job, productivity increases.

According to Robbins (2003), a dissatisfied employee can still be a loyal employee where such an employee will be passively waiting for conditions to improve. In addition, such an employee can also express their dissatisfaction by terminating their relationship with the organization, actively making their opinion heard in an attempt to improve matters, or by passively allowing conditions to worsen through neglect. He further emphasizes the importance of employee job satisfaction as a factor influencing, amongst others, employee work performance. He argues that happy workers aren't necessarily productive workers. This argument is in line with Poisat's deduction (2006) that satisfied employees are not necessarily productive employees.

He further suggests that the opposite might be more accurate; that productivity will probably lead to satisfaction. The enactment of the HRMP Act 2012 implies that HR practitioners adopt new approaches on employee recruitment and retention, training, compensation and performance and employee relations. These changes in the long run impacts on the job outcomes of the employees and the productivity of organizations. This study intends to assess the influence of HRM practices on employee performance in selected public universities in Kenya.

### **Public Universities in Kenya**

Higher education in Kenya can be traced back to 1922 when the then Makerere College in Uganda was established as a small technical college which was then expanded to meet the needs of the three East African countries; Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika and Zanzibar, as well as Zambia and Malawi. In the 1940s and early 50s it was the only college that was providing university education in East Africa. This lasted until 1956 when the Royal Technical College was established in Nairobi.

In 1963, the Royal Technical College became the University College, Nairobi, following the establishment of the University of East Africa with three constituent colleges in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Kampala (Makerere). The University of East Africa offered programs and degrees of the University of London till 1966. In 1970, the University of East Africa was dissolved to create three autonomous universities of Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Makerere.

The University of Nairobi was thus established as the first university in Kenya. Kenya placed considerable importance on the role of education in promoting economic and social development after the achievement of independence in 1963 (Sifuna, 1998). This resulted in the rapid expansion of the education system to provide qualified persons for the growing economic



and administrative institutions, and to undertake some reforms to reflect the aspirations of an independent state (Court & Ghai, 1974). Throughout 1970s the Kenyan government strengthened and expanded the University of Nairobi, the only one then, as a conscious effort to provide university education to all qualified Kenyans and as a move to develop the necessary human resource for the private and public sectors.

As years went by, the number of Kenyans seeking university education exceeded the capacity of University of Nairobi. This led to the establishment of Moi University in 1984 as the second university in Kenya. This was in line with recommendations of the Presidential Working Commission (Mackay Report, 1981). The commission collected views from many people and found an overwhelming support by Kenyans for the establishment of a second and technologically oriented university in the country and recommended the establishment of a second university. From then, university education in Kenya has expanded with a rise in student enrolments, expansion of universities, diversity of programs and setting up of new universities and campuses. Kenyatta University which had operated as a constituent college of the University of Nairobi since 1972 became a full-fledged university in 1985. A previous agricultural college also gave way to Egerton University in 1988. Those in higher education management and leadership positions are finding it essential that they understand shifting demographics, new technologies, and the commercialization of higher education, the changing relationships between institutions and governments and the move from an industrial to an information society.

Particularly in the developing world, higher education institutions must be poised to create the human capital necessary to keep pace with the knowledge revolution. Current leaders must be trained, new leaders prepared, and students identified who will both lead and study higher education for the future. As such, the study opens a new paradigm shift and the HR teams in the universities need to keep up with the requirement of all the HRM practices in dealing with the employees in the universities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Universities are facing relentless and rapid changes. These circumstances underscore the crucial role of leadership and management in maintaining morale, enhancing productivity, and helping staff at all institutional levels cope with momentous and rapid change. Organizations all over the world are striving to improve service delivery and quality of products through a number of strategies. Employers from all walks of life are practicing human resource management. Schuler (1994) asserts that effective firms in highly competitive environments in the future will have world –class HRM departments. He notes that world-class HRM departments are heavily involved in linking HRM practices to the strategic goals of the business. Relationships between

human resource management practices and performance has been studied from different perspectives which emphasize the important role played by the human component in the competitiveness and response capacity of organizations, and this is reflected in numerous publications and research studies that have appeared in recent years (Barney 1991; Barney and Wright 1998; Wright et al., 1994). According to this view, human capital is proposed as one of the key resources on which companies build their competitive advantage (Becker and Gerhart 1996; Boxall 1996; Tyson 1995). Hansen–Thompson (2007), on HRM Practices in the Ghanaian public sector”, highlights in her findings that organizations are likely to adopt more strategic HRM practices in the face of intense competition

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The Kenyan government enacted the HRMP Act in 2012 to enable managers become HR professionals and to be effective in implementing HRM the practices. It is largely the responsibility of human resource practitioners to implement labour legislation on human resource management practices in public universities. The environment of public universities therefore requires an understanding and knowledge of how well the human resource practices can be utilized to create a high performance workplace. It is an area of HR management that requires specialized and continually updated knowledge, expertise and competence. In public universities. Just like any other business enterprises sharpening of strategies to attract, retain and motivate employees is necessary. The study therefore sought to examine the influence of the HRM Practices on the performance of employees in public universities in Kenya.

## Objective of the Study

The study sought to determine how employee relations influences employees' performance in public universities in Kenya.

## Hypotheses of the study

$H_0$  : Employee relations do not significantly influence employees' performance in public universities in Kenya.

Figure1. Conceptual framework



## Limitations of the study

The researcher faced various challenges especially in the data collection stage. First and foremost, financial constraints were evident especially when paying the data collection assistants since it took more days than expected. Therefore, this became costlier than the budget stated. However this did not affect the study. Secondly, time was another constraint since the respondents took long to give their responses in the questionnaire. This was accrued by busy schedules that the respondents had. The respondents needed enough time to comprehend what was in the questionnaire in order to give the right answers to the questions but this was not a constraint to the study since they were given more time.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

### Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory was proposed by Victor Vroom, (1964), it assumes that motivation to apply effort is conscious choice process. According to this theory people choose to put their effort into activities that they believe they can perform and that will produce desired outcomes. It argues that decision about which activities to engage in are based on combination of three set beliefs, expectancy, instrumentality and valence. Expectancy beliefs represent the individual's judgment about whether applying (or increasing) effort to a task will result in its successful accomplishments. Employees (youth development officers) with high expectancy believe that their effort, no matter how great, will affect their performance. All things equal the study is

anticipating that employee should engage in tasks like coaching and appraisal which they have expectancy beliefs.

Expectancy theory suggests that motivation is a function of perceived relation between effort, performance and desirability of consequences associated with performance outcomes. Expectancy is based on the belief that a particular level of effort will be followed by a particular level of performance. In this study therefore variables influencing an employee's expectancy perception includes: self-esteem, self-efficacy, performance appraisal, employee coaching, good materials and equipment to work (planning), effectiveness and efficiency. Instrumentality is judgment about the connection individual perceives between task performance and possible outcomes.

Valence refers to value employee places on a particular outcome. Therefore, the theory implies that employees always have certain expectations of their jobs and this is always attached to certain outcomes. This theory is important to the management of public universities especially in recruitment and selection of employees, the measurement of job tasks and work processes. Employees should be recognised for their hard work and be rewarded as per the job grades and scales they have been placed. This theory through management development can also offer a way to diagnose performance problems and then suggest how these problems can be overcome. In line with the HRM practices, Expectancy perspective ensures that employees make the appropriate make their jobs interesting and enjoyable for promotion of desirable performance outcomes (Cole, 2002).

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Human Resource Management practices enhance organizational performance. Rondeau and Wager (2001) examined the relationship between HRM practices, workplace climate and perceptions of organizational performance, in a large sample of Canadian nursing homes and found that nursing homes, which had implemented more 'progressive' HRM practices and which reported a workplace climate that strongly valued employee participation, empowerment and accountability tended to be perceived to generally perform better on a number of valued organizational outcomes. Joseph & Dai (2009) found that there are significant connections between HRM practices and firm performance; that the strategic alignment of HRM is also a driver for firm performance. In this study the researcher provides empirical studies on various HRM practices and their relationship on employee performance.

## Employee Relations as a HRM Practice

The interrelation between employee relations and customer relations has long been a research interest in various organizational disciplines. The basic premise is that in order for an organization to develop positive relationships with its customers, the organization should have positive relationships with employees who interact with those customers (Kiger, 2002). In recent years, relationships between an organization and its publics have been the focal interest in public relations research and practice (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000). Employee relations examine the various aspects on how people at work inter-relate. Employee relations, therefore, is the interaction between employees themselves and also with their employers. Such interaction can either be formal or informal. It encompasses all areas of management that may include labour relations, employee involvement and participation, employee communication and industrial relations (Armstrong, 2008).

A study by Akhaukwa *et al.*, (2013) sought to establish the effect of collective bargaining process on industrial relations environment in public universities in Kenya. The study found that academic staff felt that union and management did not cooperate well neither did they have mutual regard of each other nor were they willing to confer. Besides, management did not facilitate union's operation and its attitude to the union was not favourable. Hence, the industrial relations environment in the three public universities where the study was conducted was found to be poor. Academic staffs were also discontented with the spirit of willingness to give and take, the degree of members' participation and feedback. The study further revealed that collective bargaining process had a significant effect on industrial relations environment in public universities in Kenya.

Collective bargaining also made a significant (and positive) contribution to industrial relations environment. This implies that a flawed process that is perceived to be unfair is likely to result in poor industrial relations environment and vice versa. In marketing, scholars point out that you need satisfied and motivated employees in order to provide quality service to customers. Berry (1981) explained that employees are the internal customers and jobs are internal products that satisfy the needs and wants of internal customers while addressing objectives of the organization. Berry further suggested using internal marketing to increase employee satisfaction and motivation. More recently, the notion of internal branding began to emerge as an alternative to internal marketing. Proponents of internal branding argue that a company must first gain employees' support in its brand (Mitchell, 2002). All organizations which aim at high performance need to have policy agenda to create relationship with the employees or working people, which support their business objectives what this calls for, is to have some employee management relations (Sultan, 1997).

The employment relationship is also contradictory for those who have to manage it. Employees represent both a cost and an investment, which means constantly making compromises. Motivating employees to do what managers want is also far from being a straightforward matter. According to Edwards' (2003) managements have to pursue the objectives of control and releasing creativity and the problem is that these involve very different and conflicting strategies. Very tight monitoring is not only costly, but also can reduce the prospects of employees using their initiative. But lax control can mean that different groups and/or individuals may pursue aims and objectives that are incompatible with one another.

Employee-employer relations can be improved if the organization implements effective HRM practices. Tzafir et al. (2004) conducted a survey to find out the consequences of effective human resource management practices on employees trust. The result indicated a positive and significant influence of empowerment, organizational communication and procedural justice as determinants of employees trust in their managers. The result also indicated that procedural justice mediates the impact of employee development on their trust in their managers. The HRM practices help the organization to increase mutual understanding between the employees and the employer. Guzzo and Noonan (1994) considered HRM practices as a communication channel between employer and employees. Rousseau and Greller (1994) proposed HRM practices as contract-shaping events. The requirement of employees and employers to act and see themselves as a group seeking the same objectives holds its own challenges. Dunlop (1967) addresses this matter by stating that another characteristic of collective bargaining involves the determination of priorities within each party of the bargaining process. The view that a homogeneous union negotiates with a homogeneous management or association is erroneous and mischievous.

Collective bargaining is about compromise and assessment of priorities within each side. Venter, Levy, Holtzhausen, Conradie, Bendeman & Dworzanowski-Venter (2011) point out that Collective bargaining is premised on the joint regulation of the employment relationship through co-operation, commonality, trust and compromise. According to Boldman and Deal (2003), by encouraging employees to work in teams, they become more competent, motivated and flexible enough to undertake multiple tasks as well as deliver outstanding products and services required by the customers.

According to Fair weather (2005), employees will feel happier and work better if they perceive their employer as reasonable and fair. Cory (2006) contends that when workers perceive inequity, they will try to re-establish equitable changes. Leaders who develop and communicate a compelling vision of their organization can make a profound impact on employee motivation (Afful Broni, 2004). Employees crave for a job well done including being

noticed and acknowledged when they do something well (Blanchard & Witts, 2009). Yet what typically happens is nothing or worse yet, the assignment of more work. Blanchard and Witts (2009) posit that when firms do not take the time to actively reward the recognized good performance, the passion for the job diminishes with every unrecognized accomplishment. Employees are motivated by performance feedback with the desire to do well. According to Haizlip (2008) involving employees in decisions that affect them not only increase their personal commitment, but also motivates them to be advocates for their decisions.

Supporting this assertion, Agarwal (2008) contends that when employees are involved in making decisions and planning the implementation of changes that affect them, they implement changes faster with higher performance than employees who are merely communicated to about the change. He further asserts that employees greatly desire to have the tools, training, support and authority to make decisions and perform their jobs correctly.

### **Employee Performance**

Human resources are considered the most important asset of an organization, but very few organizations are able to fully harness its potential. According to Lado and Wilson (1994) human resource is seen as a system consisting of a set of distinct but interrelated activities, functions, and processes that are directed at attracting, developing, and maintaining (or disposing of) a firm's human resources. Traditionally, management of this system has gained more attention from service organizations than from manufacturing organizations. However, to enhance operational performance, effectively managing this system is equally important in both types of organizations. Needless to say, sophisticated technologies and innovative manufacturing practices alone can do very little to enhance operational performance unless the requisite human resource management (HRM) practices are in place to form a consistent socio-technical system. For this reason, organizations need to carefully evaluate their existing HRM practices and modify them, if needed, so that employees can effectively contribute to operational performance improvement. The widely accepted theoretical basis for the relationship between human resource management and organizational performance is the high performance work system framework provided by Appelbaum et.al. (2000). At the core of a high performance work system, according to Appelbaum et.al., is an organization that enables non-managerial employees to participate in substantive decisions.

The high performance work system also requires supportive human resource practices that enhance worker skills and that provide incentives for workers to use their skills and participate in decisions. Appelbaum et.al (2000) showed how these three elements of a high performance work system: opportunity to participate, skills and incentives contributed to

productivity in three manufacturing industries. Regarding the effects of HR practices on organizational outcomes, Deng, Menguc, and Benson (2003) reported that in their sample of SOEs, a bundle of HR practices had a substantial impact on export performance.

Yu and Egri (2005) found that several HR practices were related to job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment of employees working in a JV and an SOE. Bjorkman and Fan (2002) reported that HR practices that focus on individual performance and employment motivation were strong predictors of firm performance in FIEs. According to Uysal and Koca (2009) research on HRM practices and organizational performance, HRM practices have a positive outcome on organizational performance but a weak relationship with market performance. Uysal and Koca (2009) further found that performance-based pay, training and recruitment have a strong positive relationship with organizational performance. Khan (2010) found that there is a positive relationship between compensation, employee relations, training and development, and recruitment and selection by themselves and also on organizational performance. In Kenya, a new law was passed to have all HR practitioners be certified in order to work in the profession. This came as a result of some organizations not adhering to the requirements of standards, qualifications and skill required for a person to practice HR.

An example of an organization whereby a store keeper was moved to HR when a vacancy arose (Maurer, 2013). This is evidence of how organizations don't fully grasp the benefits of HR practices to their overall performance. We see these types of promotions in many organizations; people are put in HR positions without having the required certification and skills. According to Sarkar and Kumar (2007) organizational performance is hinged on the approach which the organization adopts in the recruitment and selection of employees. To this end, Sarkar and Kumar (2007) spoke of a holistic model of recruitment i.e. emphasizing importance of the whole process of recruitment and the interdependence of its parts (Sinha & Thaly, 2013).

In other professions such as accounting, the East African Community Institutes of Accountants and the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Kenya (ICPAK) ensures that the nation not only has professionally trained accountants, but also that the organizations in the country follow strict financial rules and regulations, including adherence to the international financial reporting standards. In this study the influence of the new law on the performance of HR practitioners will be established.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. According to Burns & Grove (2003), the purpose of research design is to achieve greater control of the study and to improve the



validity of the study by examining the research problem. The study sought to obtain descriptive and self-reported information from the HR employees in public universities in Kenya. The design allows the researcher to expose the respondents to a set of questions to allow comparison. A survey design was appropriate for this study because it allows collection of information for both independent and dependent variables using questionnaires (Orodho, 2005).

This design allows the researcher to combine both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. According to Kothari (2009) qualitative approaches provide verbal descriptions rather than numerical descriptions. Descriptive Survey research design was successfully used by Ghansah (2011) on the role of employee retention on job performance in Accra Brewery Company Limited. The researcher sought to obtain both primary and secondary data which necessitated the choice of descriptive survey.

### Target Population

This study focused on all HR professionals employed in public universities in Kenya. The target population of the study included HR employees from selected public universities in Kenya. Kenya has a total of 22 public universities distributed across the country. The study purposely targeted 8 of the universities HR employees to participate in the study. There are a total of 280 HR employees in the selected public universities. These formed the target population for the study.

### Sample Size

The purpose of sampling is to secure a representative group (Mugenda, 2008). Burns and Grove (2003), refer to sampling as a process of selecting a group of people, events or behaviour with which to conduct a study.

The sample for the study was designed to produce a representation of the HR employees working in public universities in Kenya. To arrive at a sample size, the study adopted a formula by Nassiuma (2009), as shown in equation (3.1), for estimating a sample size,  $n$  (125), from a known population size,  $N$  (280) and a coefficient of variation (V.C) of 30%. In the equation,  $N$  is population size;  $C$  (0.3) is coefficient of variation, and  $e$  (0.02) is error margin.

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

### **Sampling Technique**

To arrive at the above sample size, the study adopted purposive sampling technique in the first stage to select eight universities in the country. In this respect, it was assumed that HR professionals have similar characteristics. In this case Moi University, Laikipia university, Egerton university, JKUAT, South Eastern university of Kenya, Maseno university, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology and Kisii university were selected since they meet the criteria for selection. Lee, Forthofer and Lorimer (1989), considered random sampling technique as a more practical approach because it offers no biasness by providing every element with equal chance of being selected. In the second stage simple random sampling technique suggested by Vuuren and Maree (2002) was adopted to select the portion of the sample by dividing the total number of HR officers in that university by the total number of all HR officers in the eight selected universities and then multiplied by the sample size (125).

### **Data collection Instruments**

The study used structured questionnaires that were distributed to all the HR workers. Questionnaires were used to cope with the constraints of limited time and budget as they help to obtain more responses from a large number of respondents in a short time and obtain structured responses. Questionnaires are generally convenient in data analysis (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). The questionnaire contained various items that sought different information from the targeted respondents. The questionnaires contained a five point Likert scale (5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neutral, 2-disagree and 1-strongly disagree) to measure the variables under the study.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher proceeded to collect data from the selected respondents after receiving permission from the relevant authorities. The researcher visited the area of study before actual data collection for familiarisation and acquaintance. During this visit, the researcher informed the administrators about the purpose of the study and book appointments for data collection. After familiarisation, data was collected using the mentioned instrument. The completed instruments were verified and collected on the same day of distribution.

### **Pilot Testing**

In conducting the pilot study, the researcher was interested in establishing whether the respondents have understood the questions and thus offer the information required. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) argue that conducting a pilot study is important before the main study. The

pilot testing was done using 10% of the sample population who were later excluded during data collection stage. This enabled the researcher to conduct reliability tests and familiarize herself with the research environment. This also was important in checking the suitability and the clarity of questions on the instruments designed, relevance of the information being sought, the language used and the content validity of the research instrument.

### **Validity of the Questionnaire**

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on the research results. For a data collection instrument to be considered valid, the content selected and included must be relevant to the need or gap established. The research instruments were tested for validity to ascertain whether they measure the variables under study. According to Borg and Gall (1999), validity of an instrument is improved through expert judgment. As such, the content validity was ascertained by engaging the research supervisor to check and assess the frequency of errors and the accuracy of data expected. The process of validation enabled the researcher to test the suitability of the questions, the adequacy of the instructions provided, the appropriateness of the format and sequence of questions. Some corrections were made to the questionnaires and the final version was printed out.

### **Reliability of the Questionnaire**

According to Kohl (2005) reliability is the ability of a test to consistently yield same results when repeated measurements are taken of the same individual under the same conditions. Trial testing of the measuring instruments should be undertaken using a few subjects whose characteristics are similar to those in the sample to ascertain the feasibility of the study (Nkpa, 1997). The reliability of the research questionnaire for this study will be determined through half split technique. The questionnaire was piloted by taking 10% in the sample population who will later be excluded in the actual data collection process. Reliability coefficient values were computed using Cronbach alpha coefficient method. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. Values above 0.7 were assumed to indicate that the instrument is reliable.

### **Data Analysis and Presentation**

Data collected was processed and analysed based on the objectives and research hypotheses using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. This was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (percentages, frequencies, standard

deviation and means) presented in tables was used to organize and summarize data and to describe the characteristics of the sample while Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test all hypotheses. A regression analysis was done to fit the model as shown in equation (3.2). In this equation -----

$$Y=b_0+b_1X_1+b_2X_2+b_3X_3+b_4X_4+\varepsilon \quad \dots\dots$$

Where, Y – Employee performance (dependent variable)

$X_1$  – Recruitment and selection

$X_2$  – Employee training

$X_3$  – Employee compensation

$X_4$  – Employee relations

$b_0$  – Intercept

$b_1, b_2, b_3, b_4$  – Are parameter estimates

$\varepsilon$  – Error term for the regression

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### Response Rate

A total of 125 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents across the selected public universities. From these, 120 questionnaires were returned. This represented a response rate of 92.8 % which was classified as a very good response rate according to Babbie (1990). After sorting out the returned questionnaires, 116 questionnaires were found to be appropriate for data analysis since they were completely filled and they had no multiple entries. To enhance this response rate, the researcher had contact persons who assisted in following up on the questionnaire. On the other hand, the researcher tried to reach the respondents by sending short messages to remind them. In addition, the researcher made phone calls to enquire of the respondents' progress in the filling of the questionnaire.

### Descriptive Statistics

The study sought the respondents' perceptions towards the various variables under the study. Their level of agreement or disagreement was assessed through a Likert scales of 1 to 5 ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The findings were presented relative to the study variables as discussed hereafter.

### *Employee Relations and Employee Performance*

The study further sought to establish the respondents' perceptions in regard to employee relations in line with employee performance. To begin with, the trend in the responses was

established through the frequencies and percentages. The findings from the analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Responses regarding employee relations

	n	SA	A	U	D	SD
	Percent					
1 The university has worked towards enhancement of employee relations	116	9.5	28.4	20.7	34.5	6.9
2 Better employees' relations in the university also influence customer relations of the university.	116	14.7	28.4	18.1	31	7.8
3 The university has established good relations with employee unions and facilitates their operations.	116	8.6	18.1	25.9	37.1	10.3
4 In managing employee relations, the university management seeks objectives of control and realizing creativity in work place.	116	7.8	29.3	25.9	25.9	11.2
5 Good HRM practices help the university management increase mutual understanding between the employees and the employer.	116	15.5	23.3	19.8	32.8	8.6
6 Employees feel happier when they perceive the employer as reasonable and fair.	116	12.9	31	19.8	33.6	2.6
7 Employee involvement in decision making of matters affecting them motivates them to advocate for their decisions.	116	16.4	25	24.1	28.4	6
Valid n (listwise)	116					

From the findings it was observed that 37.9% of the respondents agreed and or strongly agreed and 41.4% disagreed and or strongly disagreed that the university has worked towards enhancement of employee relations. On the other hand, 43.1% of the respondents agreed and or strongly agreed while 38.8% disagreed and or strongly disagreed that better employees' relations in the university also influence customer relations of the university. Kiger (2002) observes that the basic premise is that in order for an organization to develop positive

relationships with its customers, the organization should have positive relationships with employees who interact with those customers. Therefore, good relations within the institutions employees would translate to better customer relations. About 37.1% disagree and 25.9% of respondents were undecided and 18.1% agreed respectively that the university has established good relations with employee unions and facilitates their operations.

The results appeared to confirm the findings by Akhaukwa et.al (2013) who found that academic staff felt that union and management did not cooperate well neither did not they have mutual regard of each other nor were they willing to confer. The study further found out that the management did not facilitate unions operation and its attitude to the union was not favourable. This serves to indicate that the industrial relations in the universities are poor.

The respondents were in agreement (29.3%), undecided (25.9%) and were in disagreement (25.9%) with the assertion that in managing employee relations, the university management seeks objectives of control and realizing creativity in work place. Additionally, 38.8% of the respondents agreed and or strongly agreed while 41.4% of the respondents disagreed and or strongly disagreed that good HRM practices help the university management increase mutual understanding between the employees and the employer.

Moreover, the assertion that employee feel happier when they perceive the employer as reasonable and fair saw 33.6% of the respondents disagree, 31% agree and 19.8% undecided. Blanchard and Witts (2009) observed that employees crave for a job well done including being noticed and acknowledged when they do something well. Further they argue that when firms do not take the time to actively reward the recognized good performance, the passion for the job diminishes with every unrecognized accomplishment.

On the other hand, the findings indicated that 41.4% of the respondents agreed and or strongly agreed, 28.4%disagreed while 24.1% were undecided on whether employee involvement in decision making of matters affecting them motivates them to advocate for their decisions. This is in line with Haizlip (2008) observation that involving employees in decisions that affect them not only increase their personal commitment but also motivates them to be advocates for their decisions.

Agarwal (2008) contends that when employees are involved in making decisions and planning the implementation of changes that affect them, they implement changes faster with higher performance than employees who are merely communicated to about the change. The means and standard deviation values were established to guide the researcher in making relevant inferences on the general trend in respondents' views regarding employee relations. The findings from the analysis are as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics regarding employee relations

	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
1. The university the enhancement of the university employee relations	116	1	5	2.99	1.138
2. Better employees' relation in the university also influences customer relations of the university.	116	1	4	3.11	1.221
3. The university has established good relations with employee unions and facilitates their operations.	116	2	5	2.78	1.127
4. In managing employee relations, the university management seeks objectives of control and realizing creativity in work place.	116	1	4	2.97	1.149
5. Good HRM practices help the university management increase mutual understanding between the employees and the employer.	116	2	5	3.04	1.240
6. Employees feel happier when they perceive the employer as reasonable and fair.	116	2	4	3.18	1.116
7. Employee involvement in decision making of matters affecting them motivates them to advocate for their decisions.	116	1	5	3.17	1.189
Valid n (listwise)	116				

The results demonstrated agreement in the aspects of employee relations with all the statements registering means approximately equal to three (undecided). Respondents were undecided on whether the universities have worked towards the enhancement of the employee relations, whether better employee relations in the university registering a mean of 2.99. They were also undecided as to whether better employee relations influence customer relations of the university with a mean of 3.11, whether the university has established good relations with employee unions and facilitates their operations and on whether in managing employee relations, the university management seeks objectives of control and realizing creativity in workplace.

The respondents were non-committal as to whether the university management seeks objectives of control and realizing creativity in the work place giving a mean of 2.97. They further remained non-committal on whether good HRM practices help the university management increase mutual understanding between the employees and the employer and registered a mean of 3.04.

In a study by Tzafrir et.al (2004), the findings indicated that employee relations can be improved by effective HRM practices. As such, empowerment, organizational communication and procedural justice foster employees trust in their managers. They were further undecided whether employee involvement in decision making on matters affecting them motivates to advocate their own decisions registering a mean of 3.17. All the responses had standard deviation values greater than one. This indicated that the respondents expressed very diverse views regarding the aspects of employee relations.

### **Employee Performance**

Analysis was further done to establish the perceptions of the respondents towards employee performance in regard to HRM practices. In this regard, the trend in responses was sought by showing the frequencies and percentages of the responses as in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of responses on employee performance

	n	SA	A	U	D	SD
8. The management enables non-managerial employees to participate in decision making.	116	4.3	25.9	12.9	52.6	4.3
9. Performance in this institution has been enhanced by high employee motivation.	116	5.2	23.3	20.7	45.7	5.2
10. The performance of this institution has been improved due to better reward system in the institution.	116	10.3	31.9	12.1	40.5	6
11. Adherence to regulations and legislation guides the employee performance of this institution.	116	10.3	31	28.4	24.1	6
12. Hiring of qualified human resources has enhanced the employee performance of the institution.	116	12.9	33.6	19	29.3	5.2
13. The institution has performance reviews and appraisal systems in place.	116	8.6	34.5	29.3	23.3	4.3
14. As a result of improved employee performance, institutional infrastructure has expanded to accommodate more customers.	116	12.9	31	22.4	25.9	7.8
Valid N (listwise)	116					



The findings showed that 56.9% of the respondents disagreed and or strongly disagreed that the management enables non-managerial employees to participate in decision making. This is contrary to Appelbaum et.al (2000) who observed that at the core of a high performance work system is an organization that enables non-managerial employees to participate in substantive decisions. 25.9% disagreed with the foregoing statement while 12.9% were undecided. About 50.9% of the respondents disagreed and or strongly disagreed, 23.3% agreed and 20.7% were undecided on whether the performance in their institution has been enhanced by high employee motivation. The high percentage of respondents disagreeing with this statement indicates that the universities have not invested in employee motivation. Studies have shown that HR practices that focus on individual performance and employee motivation were strong predictors of organizational performance (Bjorlman & Fan, 2002). Further 40.5% of the respondents disagreed while 31.9% agreed that the performance of their institution has been improved due to better reward system in the institution.

According to Uysal and Koca (2009), performance based pay; training and recruitment had a strong positive relationship with organizational performance. The findings therefore could not ascertain whether the universities are able to match employees reward system with their performance. The findings further showed that 31% of the respondents agreed whereas 28.4% were undecided and 24.1% of them disagreed with the assertion that adherence to regulations and legislation guides the employee performance of the institution.

As such, the respondents could completely ascertain that HRM practices are guiding the operations and consequently the performance of the universities. On the other hand, 33.6% of the respondents agreed while 29.3% disagreed. Pilbeam and Corbridge, (2006) in their study had observed that recruitment and selection plays a significant role in ensuring effectiveness and performance. They noted that if work organization were able to acquire employees who possess relevant knowledge, skills and aptitude, and are also able to accurately predict their potential future capabilities, recruiting and selecting staff in an effective manner can both avoid undesirable costs for example those associated with high staff turnover, poor performance and dissatisfied customers and engender a mutually beneficial employment relationship characterized, wherever possible, by high commitment on both sides. This is reflected in improved performance in the overall organization. This is supported by Laroche and Rutherford (2007) who explains that most organisations confess that the quality of their employees does play a critical role in the success of the organisation.

Further 34.5% of the respondents agreed while 29.3% were undecided and 23.3% disagreed that the institution has performance reviews and appraisal systems in place. According to Pilbeam and Corbridge, (2006), employees need to be developed and appraised

from time to time in order for them to be abreast with new trends and challenges. When employees are developed it help increase their performance and help sustain the growth of organizations. In addition, 31% Of the respondents agreed and 25.9% disagreed while 22.4% remained undecided on whether as a result of improved employee performance the institutional infrastructure has expanded to accommodate more customers.

The study further established the means and standard deviation values to get the general view of the respondents regarding the employee performance on HRM practices. This is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 : Descriptive statistics on employee performance

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
8 The management enables non-managerial employees to participate in decision making.	116	1	5	2.73	1.033
9 Performance in this institution has been enhanced by high employee motivation.	116	1	4	2.78	1.031
10 The performance of this institution has been improved due to better reward system in the institution.	116	2	5	3.03	1.154
11 Adherence to regulations and legislation guides the employee performance of this institution.	116	1	5	3.16	1.092
12 Hiring of qualified human resource has enhanced the employee performance of the institution.	116	1	4	3.20	1.151
13 The institution has performance reviews and appraisal systems in place.	116	2	5	3.20	1.032
14 As a result of improved employee performance, institutional infrastructure has expanded to accommodate more customers.	116	1	5	3.16	1.177
Valid N (listwise)	116				

The respondents were undecided as to whether the management enabled non- managerial employees to participate in decision making registering a mean of 2.73. They could not commit themselves whether performance in the institution has been enhanced by employee motivation registering a mean of 2.78. The respondents further could not decide whether adherence to regulations and legislations guides the employee performance in their institutions by a mean of 3.16 and whether hiring of qualified human resource has enhanced the employee performance of the institution by a mean 3.20. Respondents were also not sure that the institutions have performance reviews and appraisal systems in place registering a mean of 3.20 and that as a

result of improved employee performance, institutional infrastructure have expanded to accommodate more customers registering a mean of 3.16. It was also observed that the respondents were not in agreement with one another with most having diverse views as demonstrated by standard deviation values that were greater than 1 in all the aspects.

### **Inferential Statistics Results**

In this section the researcher sought to establish the relationship between the study variable as well as testing the study's hypotheses

#### ***Employee Relations and Employee Performance***

The fourth objective for the study sought to determine how employee relations influences performance of employees in public universities in Kenya. The following hypothesis was postulated in regard to the objective.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** Employee relations do not significantly influence employee performance in public universities in Kenya.

Analysis of variance was used to test this hypothesis at a level of significance of 0.05. The findings from this analysis are described in Table 5.

Table 5 : Model summary on employee relations and employee performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.763 <sup>a</sup>	.582	.578	.52488

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Relations

From the findings, it was observed that there was a strong positive relationship ( $R=.763$ ) between employee relations and employee performance. The R-square value derived from the analysis was 0.582. This value indicated that employee relations accounted for up to 58.2% of the total variation in employee performance. As such, employee relations is paramount in determining employee performance since it contributes more than half of the total variation in employee performance. According to Fair weather (2005), employees will feel happier and work better if they perceive their employer as reasonable and fair. Therefore, enhancing employee employer relations would go a long way in enhancing organizational performance. The employer and employees should work as team in meeting the organizational goals. According to Boldman and Deal (2003), by encouraging employees to work in teams, they become more competent, motivated and flexible enough to undertake multiple tasks as well as deliver outstanding products and services required by the customers.

The analysis of variance yielded the following results in Table 6.

Table 6: Anova<sup>a</sup> for employee relations and employee performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	43.659	1	43.659	158.473	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	31.407	114	.275		
Total	75.065	115			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Relations

The analysis generated an F-statistic value ( $F_{(1, 114)} = 158.473$ ,  $p = .000$ ) which was significant at  $p < .01$ . This means that employee relations under HRMP Act guidelines significantly influence employee performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis,  $H_{04}$  that employee relations do not significantly influence employee performance in public universities in Kenya was rejected. The study concluded that employee relations under have a significant influence on the performance of employees in public universities in Kenya. The degree of this influence was depicted by formulating a linear equation between employee relations and employee performance. The model coefficients were used to formulate the linear equation as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Coefficients on employee relations and employee performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta		
1	(Constant)	.929	.174		5.334	.000
	Employee Relations	.694	.055	.763	12.589	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

The t-values for the model coefficients were significant at  $p < .01$ . Therefore, employee relations coefficient and the constant value are significant in predicting the performance of employees in public universities in Kenya. The linear equation generated from this analysis is as shown below.

$$Y = 0.929 + 0.694X_1$$

The equation indicates that employees' performance is a constant value of .929 units when all extraneous variables are held constant. However, a unit increase in employee relations leads to an increase in employee performance by a factor of 0.694 units. Therefore, employees' relations have a significant role in determining employee performance. The study therefore finds that

working on employee relations is paramount to improving organizational performance. This is achieved by engaging the employees in major decision making in the organization.

According to Haizlip (2008) involving employees in decisions that affect them not only increase their personal commitment, but also motivates them to be advocates for their decisions. Supporting this assertion, Agarwal (2008) contends that when employees are involved in making decisions and planning the implementation of changes that affect them, they implement changes faster with higher performance than employees who are merely communicated to about the change.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study sought to establish the influence of employee relations on employees' performance in public universities in Kenya. The findings were in tandem with the research objective thus the research was able to draw pertinent conclusions from the findings.

The respondents further remained non-committal on whether good HRM practices help the university management increase mutual understanding between the employees and the employer, whether employees feel happier when they perceive the employer as reasonable and fair and on whether employee involvement in decision making of matters affecting them motivates them to advocate for their decisions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS ON EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND PERFORMANCE**

Performance is key to all human resource management practices. The researcher recommended that organisations should create open systems where employees participate in decisions in order for good employee relations to prevail hence, good performance. The researcher further recommended that workable employee relations policies that are in should be formulated and implemented in order for all managers to be aware of how to deal with matters of employee relations.

The universities should work towards creating a harmonious relationship between the management and their employees. The study showed that employee relations have strong positive impact on the performance of employees in the organizations.

The universities should establish good relationships with employee unions and facilitate their operations. Good relations in the organization enhance customer service thus improving customer satisfaction and loyalty. Good employee relations lead to job satisfaction and builds high morale in employees as they feel valued by their employer. Therefore, public universities should embrace good employee relations to maintain the best labour practices.

## AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. The study was limited in scope given that it only focused on public universities in Kenya. The researcher therefore recommends that the study be replicated in other sectors of the economy beginning with the private institutions and other service organisations to enable the generalization of findings. This will further go a long way in shedding light on the role of regulations in the HR management practices and policies.
2. On the other hand, the researcher observed that there are other areas of HR practices that can be enhanced such as performance appraisal and organizational leadership. Thus, the study recommends that future studies should focus on the influence of performance appraisal on employees in organizations in Kenya.
3. Lastly, given that the study focused on the different components effects on organizational performance, the researcher recommends that studies should be conducted on individual's components effects on organizational performance across various sectors of the economy.

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