

The Effect of Recognition-Based Rewards on Employee Performance in County Government of Bungoma, Kenya

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Abstract- *Recognition-based rewards have emerged as critical motivational tools in enhancing employee performance across various organizational contexts. This study investigated the effect of recognition-based rewards on employee performance in the County Government of Bungoma, Kenya. The study was guided by the Expectancy Theory of Motivation and employed a descriptive survey design. A sample of 351 employees was drawn from 6,334 employees across ten departments using stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics revealed that employees generally perceived recognition-based rewards positively (mean scores ranging from 3.73 to 4.13). Regression analysis indicated a strong positive relationship ($R=0.793$, $R^2=0.628$) between recognition-based rewards and employee performance. The findings revealed that recognition-based rewards significantly predict employee performance ($\beta=0.798$, $t=24.297$, $p<0.001$). The study concludes that recognition-based rewards are vital for enhancing employee performance in public sector organizations. The study recommends implementing structured recognition programs and establishing clear criteria for recognition to improve organizational performance and employee satisfaction.*

Indexed Terms- *Recognition-Based Rewards, Employee Performance, Public Sector, County Government*

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee performance remains a cornerstone of organizational success, particularly in public sector organizations where service delivery directly impacts community welfare (Hassan, 2022). In the contemporary work environment, organizations are

increasingly recognizing that traditional monetary incentives alone are insufficient to sustain high levels of employee motivation and performance. Recognition-based rewards, encompassing non-monetary incentives such as public acknowledgment, certificates, and verbal appreciation, have gained prominence as effective motivational tools (Puspitasari, 2024).

The importance of recognition-based rewards in enhancing employee performance has been extensively documented across various organizational contexts. Research indicates that employees who feel valued and appreciated through recognition programs demonstrate higher levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and productivity (Sinambela et al., 2022). In the African context, particularly in Kenya's devolved government system, the need for effective reward systems has become more critical as county governments strive to improve service delivery and achieve their mandate of bringing services closer to the people.

Bungoma County Government, like many other county governments in Kenya, faces challenges related to employee motivation and performance. Despite various efforts to implement recognition programs, there remains a gap between the existing reward mechanisms and desired levels of employee performance. Preliminary observations suggest that employees continue to exhibit low morale and suboptimal productivity, indicating that the current recognition-based reward systems may not be fully aligned with employee expectations and needs (Dennis & Eng'airo, 2024).

This study aimed to determine the effect of recognition-based rewards on employee performance in the County Government of Bungoma, Kenya. The findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge

on human resource management practices in the public sector and provide practical insights for improving employee motivation and organizational performance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Expectancy Theory of Motivation, developed by Victor Vroom in 1964. The theory posits that employee motivation is influenced by three key components: expectancy (belief that effort leads to performance), instrumentality (belief that performance leads to outcomes), and valence (value placed on the outcomes) (Isaac et al., 2023). In the context of recognition-based rewards, the theory suggests that employees will be motivated to perform better when they believe their efforts will be recognized (expectancy) that good performance will lead to recognition (instrumentality) and that they value the recognition received (valence).

2.2 Empirical Review

Recognition-based rewards have been extensively studied across various organizational contexts, with consistent findings indicating their positive impact on employee performance. In the United States, Presslee et al. (2023) examined how team-based recognition influenced employee engagement and effort among 250 employees across industries. Their findings revealed that team-based recognition significantly enhanced collaboration and individual motivation, leading to improved performance outcomes. However, the study focused primarily on private sector organizations and team-based recognition, leaving a gap regarding individual recognition in public sector organizations.

In Nigeria, Odunayo (2022) studied recognition-based rewards in hotels across Lagos using a descriptive research approach with 100 employees. The findings showed that recognition-based rewards significantly improved service quality and employee motivation. Employees who received regular recognition demonstrated higher levels of job satisfaction and were more likely to exceed performance expectations. However, the research was limited to the hospitality sector and did not explore the long-term impact of recognition-based rewards.

In Rwanda, Chrissy et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study on the role of incentives and recognition in public institutions, interviewing 50 employees. The study revealed that recognition improved job satisfaction and retention rates among public sector employees. However, the research lacked an in-depth analysis of specific recognition practices and their differential impacts on various performance dimensions.

Within the Kenyan context, studies have highlighted both the potential and challenges of implementing recognition-based rewards in public sector organizations. In Mombasa County, Ali (2023) found that recognition improved employee loyalty in state corporations, yet noted that inconsistent application across departments hindered overall impact. Similarly, in Kisumu County, Pkite and Ng'eno (2023) highlighted that recognition improved performance but was often implemented without clear guidelines, leading to perceptions of inequity among employees.

2.3 Research Gap

Despite extensive research on recognition-based rewards, several gaps remain in the literature. Most studies have focused on private sector organizations, with limited attention to public sector contexts where organizational culture, performance metrics, and reward systems may differ significantly. There is insufficient research on how recognition-based rewards can be standardized and consistently implemented across multiple departments within a single organization. This study addresses these gaps by examining the effect of recognition-based rewards on employee performance specifically within the County Government of Bungoma.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Location

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the relationship between recognition-based rewards and employee performance. The study was conducted in Bungoma County, Kenya, selected due to its diverse population and institutional representation.

3.2 Target Population and Sample Size

The target population comprised 6,334 employees from ten departments within the County Government of Bungoma. Using stratified and purposive sampling techniques, a sample of 400 employees was selected to ensure proportional representation across all departments.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected using structured questionnaires containing demographic questions and Likert scale items measuring recognition-based rewards and employee performance. The questionnaire included seven items measuring recognition-based rewards, covering aspects such as appreciation by supervisors, motivation effects, fairness, value and respect, communication of criteria, meaningfulness, and consistency of recognition. Data was analyzed using SPSS software, employing descriptive statistics and linear regression analysis. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Response Rate and Demographics

Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, 351 were properly completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 87.75%. The demographic analysis revealed that 57.5% of respondents were male while 42.5% were female. The largest age group (36.8%) was aged 31-40 years, followed by 41-50 years (28.8%). Educational qualifications showed that 53.6% held bachelor's degrees, 27.6% had diplomas, and 11.7% possessed master's degrees. Work experience indicated that 34.5% had 4-6 years of experience, while 23.9% had 7-10 years.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics for Recognition-Based Rewards

The descriptive analysis of recognition-based rewards revealed generally positive perceptions among employees. The mean scores ranged from 3.73 to 4.13 on a 5-point Likert scale. The item "The recognition I receive makes me feel valued and respected as an employee" had the highest mean score (4.13, SD=1.043), while "I feel that my achievements and contributions are recognized and appreciated by my supervisors" had the lowest mean score (3.73, SD=1.196). Other items showed moderate to high agreement levels, including meaningfulness of

recognition (M=4.13, SD=1.090), fairness (M=4.04, SD=1.133), and motivational impact (M=3.95, SD=1.153).

4.3 Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Linear regression analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between recognition-based rewards and employee performance. The model summary showed an R value of 0.793, indicating a strong positive correlation. The R-square value of 0.628 indicated that recognition-based rewards explained 62.8% of the variance in employee performance, demonstrating substantial predictive power.

The ANOVA results demonstrated the overall significance of the regression model with an F-statistic of 590.363 and a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), confirming that recognition-based rewards significantly predict employee performance. The coefficients analysis revealed that the unstandardized coefficient for recognition-based rewards was 0.798 ($t=24.297$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that a one-unit increase in recognition-based rewards leads to a 0.798-unit increase in employee performance.

Based on these results, the null hypothesis "There is no statistically significant effect of recognition-based rewards on employee performance of Bungoma County Government" was rejected, confirming that recognition-based rewards have a statistically significant positive effect on employee performance.

CONCLUSION

The findings provide compelling evidence that recognition-based rewards significantly enhance employee performance in the County Government of Bungoma, Kenya. The strong positive correlation ($R=0.793$) and substantial variance explanation ($R^2=0.628$) demonstrate that recognition-based rewards are powerful predictors of employee performance in public sector organizations.

The descriptive analysis revealed that while employees generally perceive recognition-based rewards positively, there is room for improvement, particularly in ensuring that achievements and contributions are consistently recognized by supervisors. The theoretical implications support the

Expectancy Theory of Motivation, confirming that when employees perceive a clear link between their performance and recognition, their motivation and subsequent performance improve significantly.

From a practical perspective, the findings demonstrate that recognition-based rewards represent a cost-effective approach to enhancing employee performance in resource-constrained public sector organizations. Unlike monetary incentives that require substantial financial investments, recognition-based rewards can be implemented with minimal costs while yielding significant performance improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Policy Recommendations

The county government should develop and implement a comprehensive Recognition and Rewards Policy that establishes clear criteria, procedures, and standards for recognizing employee achievements. This policy should ensure consistency across all departments and eliminate the current ad-hoc approach to recognition. Management training programs should be implemented to equip supervisors with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively recognize employee contributions. Regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to assess the effectiveness of recognition programs.

6.2 Practical Recommendations

For immediate implementation, the county government should establish structured recognition programs that include monthly employee recognition ceremonies, performance awards, and public acknowledgment of exceptional contributions. Clear communication channels should be established to inform employees about recognition criteria and procedures. The organization should leverage technology to enhance recognition programs, such as developing online platforms for peer-to-peer recognition and creating digital certificates.

6.3 Future Research Suggestions

Future research should examine the long-term effects of recognition-based rewards on employee performance and investigate how these effects may vary across different organizational contexts and

cultural settings. Studies investigating the interaction between recognition-based rewards and other motivational factors such as job characteristics, organizational culture, and leadership styles would provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee motivation in public sector organizations.

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