

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Linking Work Environment with Employee Performance in Public Middle Level TIVET Institutions in Kenya

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The study sought to establish the effect of work environment on employee performance in the Public Middle Level TIVET Institutions in Kenya. **Methodology:** The study adopted a descriptive research design. Sample size was 315 targeting administrators, heads of department, teaching staff and non teaching staff. A structured questionnaire with likert scale questions was used to collect data from the respondents. An interview was also conducted with the administrators and heads of department. The study used personality trait theory which believes that the personality factors affect job performance in a work environment. **Findings:** The study indicated that there is no proper job description for most non teaching staff and distribution of available working tools and materials is done poorly in a majority of institutions, the safety and health of employees in the workplace had not been adequately addressed. The study implies that some institutions are in urgent need to improve the working conditions in order to provide a better working environment for employees to perform better. **Limitations:** the study was conducted in one county and therefore cannot be generalized in other public and private institutions. **Practical implications:** Provides evidence on effect of work environment on employee performance and offer recommendation on what the Ministries as well as institutions can do to improve performance of employees. **Originality:** this is the first study of this nature conducted in Kenya focusing on linking work environment with employee performance in public middle level TIVET institutions.

**Keywords:** *Employee performance, Kenya, Middle level, TIVET institutions, Work environment.*

## Introduction

Employees are the main human resource an institution cannot do without. They make a sufficient contribution to an institution. Attention should therefore be given to their well being in turn influence the productivity of the institution which eventually will lead to achieving the institutions vision and goals. Similarly to Public Middle level technical, industrial and vocational and entrepreneurship training (TIVET) institutions, employees are the ones who play the major roles and make significant contributions to the institution; hence the institutions should pay attention to them in order to keep them in the institution. Mondy [1] considers the attributes of successful organizations and one of his well known attributes is that, such organizations must be well and effectively managed and operating through achievable performance objectives and principles. He states that employee performance principles in an organization both private and public have the benefits of making such organizations more efficient, productive and

better adaptable to changes in the environments. Coulter et al [2] agree that the superior behavior is regarded as supportive when it entails, mutual confidence and trust; help to maintain good income; Understanding of work problems and help in doing the job; Genuine interest in personal problems; Helping with training, assist promotion; Sharing information; Seeking opinion about work problems; Being friendly and approachable and; Giving credit and recognition where due. Several countries; developed and developing, such as Italy, Brazil, China, Sweden and Japan have given more recognition to technical, industrial, vocational and entrepreneurship training (TIVET) through adequate funding. As a result, students get exposed to vocational training and to a culture of scientific investigation and application at an early age. In Europe, at least 50 percent of the students in upper secondary education pursue some form of technical or vocational education. In China, India and South East Asia the figure is 35-40 percent,

whereas in Africa it is less than 20 percent. In the study “What Room For Skills Development in Post-Primary Education? A Look at Selected Countries,” Palmer [3] looks at ten selected countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, India, China and Vietnam) and examines what room there is for skills development in ‘post primary education’. The study asserts that across the countries covered, technical, industrial, vocational and entrepreneurship training (TIVET) occurs in many different environments, both formal and informal, in institutions (schools or vocational centers and colleges), on-the job (informal apprenticeships in Ghana) or both (e.g. learner ships in South Africa). It can be short duration or long duration (a typical three year institutional course).

The ten countries examined in Palmer, Rwanda has the highest enrolment in TIVET at the secondary level (35%), followed by Tanzania (13%) and South Africa (5.8%). The study notes that Sub-Saharan Africa (6.1%) and South and West Asia (1.2%) have little room for TIVET at the post-primary school level. Given the above, it is a matter of concern that Africa lags behind the rest of the world in technology and still it continues to pay little attention to technical education and technological research. In Kenya there have been deliberate efforts to structure and deliver formal TIVET education through establishment of TIVET institutions either by the government or the private sector. There are currently eighty three Public Middle level TIVET institutions and over seven hundred youth polytechnics in the whole country that are sponsored and managed by the government. They offer courses in both technical and non technical disciplines. They therefore offer a wide range of services to large number of individuals and institutions. Its coordination has been a major challenge due to diversified nature of sub sector. All organizations are moving towards a participatory leadership and motivational orientations, associated with constant training and development, open communication, collaborative social approach and group decision making. In order to survive, compete and prosper, public middle level TIVET institutions must design their employee performance attributes and styles with the aim of improving productivity, increase efficiency and improve their communication and relationships networks, remain competitive, flexible, adaptable, committed, open and positive towards the changes taking place in the educational sector in Kenya and the East African region. Although several studies have pointed out some factors that are

responsible for performance in these institutions, no study has established the linking of work environment with employee performance in the Public Middle Level TIVET institutions in Kenya.

## Literature Review

### Theoretical Literature

The study was guided by personality trait theory. The believe that the personality factors conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion-will work specifically through goal orientation, relationship and work environment preferences on their way to influencing job performance. The personality factors openness to experience and emotional stability will manifest themselves in relationship and system maintenance work environment preferences, and through their influence on such preferences will affect job performance in TIVET institutions. Conscientiousness is the personality trait most strongly linked to performance outcomes Salgado, [4]. It was also found that conscientiousness was a strong and consistent predictor of performance motivation, Judge & Hies, [5].

The importance of the goal achievement dimension and maintaining a task orientation in work environments on the conscientiousness-performance relationship has been indicated in research by Stewart and Hollenbeck [6], whereby conscientious employees were shown to focus on task role behavior in their pursuit of team performance outcomes. The relationship between conscientiousness and increased commitment also seems to have a goal achievement mediator, as Moon [7] found that conscientiousness operational zed through achievement-striving was associated with an escalation of commitment. The relationship between the personality dimension of agreeableness and performance has also received some recent support. Agreeableness may lead to enhanced customer contact and interactions, and improved relationships and communication with leaders. Agreeable employees may be viewed as more trustworthy, and as possessing higher levels of integrity, which can aid them in customer relationships and in access to valued information.

In summary, the personality factors conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion manifest themselves in preferences for goal and relationship-oriented work environments, which in turn affect TIVET employee performance. Organizational culture – loosely defined as “the way we do things around here”-is comprised of formal and informal factors

that are constantly in tension. For example – the need to do things differently and the need for consistent processes and procedures; the need to pay attention to the external environment when making decisions and at the same time to attend to the organizations internal needs. Institutions that understand and can balance such “creative tension” effectively are more able to achieve performance goals in profitability, quality, innovation, growth and employee satisfaction. The second connection between environment and performance is at the team or work group level. This is where the majority of work occurs in information-driven or knowledge-driven organizations. Much more than individuals, groups are responsible for innovation and for processes and practices that have the ability to move the institution forward. Recent global research has shown that there are only three things that have a material impact on the ability of groups of qualified people to perform at high levels. All are related to the environment or culture in which the team operates. With these components teams can perform at unexpected levels. Without them, even the brightest, most energetic people lose focus and energy.

### **Empirical Literature**

A study carried out by Chevalier [8] revealed that when environmental supports are sound, individuals are better equipped to do what is expected of them. Moreover, if the environmental support is unstable, it is difficult to determine appropriately whether individual factors or environmental factors affect job performance. Robinson and Robinson [9] in a research study in San Francisco concluded that, data regarding work environment factors are obtained through various methods, the most reliable data are obtained from the individuals (employees) in the given environment. They provide the best information regarding how work environment factors influence their performance.

According to Ivancevich, Konopaske and Matteson [10] past research has demonstrated that the previous experience in a situation, an individual's perception is empirical. A study revealed that human beings perceive sensory stimuli and form insight, intuition, and knowledge regarding those stimuli. They give their own meaning to environmental stimuli as they attempt to make sense of their environment and the objects, people, and events in it. As a result therefore, individual meaning to stimuli is not necessarily inherent in the stimuli.

A research revealed that institutions must pay attention to employees' perceptions of the environment because employees will behave as if those perceptions were reality especially along generational lines Dessler [11]. The research reported in this article will help TIVET institutions and of employees' perceptions of their work environment by understanding the influence of generational values, beliefs, and attitudes on these perceptions. Ivancevich argue that the attribution process can also be important in understanding the behavior of other employees in the work environment thus affecting an employee's perception of others and influencing the behavior and attitude of an employee endeavoring to interact with coworkers.

Earle, [12] and Bem [13] observed that individuals explain their behavior in a manner similar to that by which they observe the behavior of others and make attributions about the causes of that behavior. They further argue that individuals examine other individuals' behavior by the qualities of distinctiveness (the degree to which a person behaves similarly in different situations), consistency (the degree to which a person engages in the same behaviors at different times), and consensus (the degree to which other human beings are engaging in the same behavior). As a result knowing the extent to which an individual's behavior exhibits these qualities assists with understanding that behavior better.

The American Society of Interior Designers, ASID, [14] carried out an independent study and revealed that the physical workplace design is one of the factors, which affect performance and job satisfaction. The study results showed that 31 percent of people were satisfied with their jobs and had pleasing workplace environments. 50 percent of people were seeking jobs and said that they would prefer a job in an institution where the physical environment is good.

Gibson et al., [15] observe that the way an employee sees a situation often has much greater meaning for understanding that employee's behavior than does the situation. Likert's [16] study of managers and subordinates shows how marked differences may exist between superiors' and subordinates' perceptions of the same event. For instance, an employee doing poorly on the job may have a perspective different from that of the supervisor. In an attempt to explain substandard performance, the employee may point to external constraints on performance such as lack of resources, inconsistent workload,

troublesome coworkers, or ambiguous job assignments. Often the supervisor disagrees, convinced that the worker lacks some quality that prohibits the worker from achieving optimal performance, Bernardin, [17].

The findings from a study by Carson, Cardy, and Dobbins [18] confirm that supervisors believe that subordinate performance is produced almost exclusively by characteristics of subordinates. Conversely, subordinates believe that much of their performance results from environmental factors of the workplace. A research found that low levels of social skill on the part of conscientious employees removed the significant relationship with performance, [18]; Witt & Ferris [19]. This result indicates the potential importance of the interpersonal interaction-oriented relationship dimension of work environments as a mediator in the conscientiousness-performance relationship.

### Method of Data Collection and Analysis

A descriptive research design was carried out in an attempt to investigate the link between work environment and employee performance in public middle level TIVET institutions in Kenya. The population for this study concentrated on administrators, heads of department, teaching staff and non teaching staff. A total of 287 employees participated in the study. Administrators and heads of department were also interviewed.

A questionnaire was used to find out the link between work environment and employee performance in public middle level technical training institutions in Kenya. A Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency counts, standard deviation and mean were determined. Correlation analysis was used to determine the link between work environment and employee performance. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was used to establish whether there were statistically significant differences in work environment items between employees in different groups/ job categories (Teaching staff, Non-teaching staff, Administrative staff and

HODs). Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used for analyzing the data.

## Findings and Discussions

### Descriptive Statistics

**Demographic Data:** The demographic data collected were gender, age, education, and number of years of experience.

A total of 287 respondents responded to the survey questionnaires as shown in table 1. While the research did not focus precisely on gender equity, the findings reflect that the sample is biased towards males. Out of these respondents, 55.1% were male and 44.9% were female. As regards education qualifications, this study revealed that only 15.3% of the respondents had postgraduate academic qualifications, 36.6% had undergraduate academic qualifications, 38.3% were diploma holders and 7.3% of the respondents only had secondary education. This is not an uncommon result as far as Kenyan middle level training institutions are concerned. Most employees in Public Middle Level TIVET institutions in Kenya nowadays hold diplomas and degrees in various disciplines of studies.

The respondents worked in various capacities in their institutions as shown in table 1. 28.2% were teaching staff and 44.9% were non-teaching staff, 13.6% were heads of departments and 13.2% held other administrative positions. According to the study findings also, most employees had a working experience of more than ten years (69.7%) while 5.9% had a working experience of less than five years. About 24.4% had a working experience of 5 to 10 years. Majority of the respondents (54.4%) had worked for current institutions for less than five years while 32.2% had worked in their current institution for more than ten years. About 13.6% had worked in their current institution for 5 to 10 years. In terms of age, a majority of the respondents (41.8%) were between the age of 41 and 50 years old. 29.6% were in the age of 31 to 40 years of age while 9.1% were between 20 to 30 years of age. 19.5% of the respondents were over the age of 50 years.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

Variable		N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	158	55.1%
	Female	129	44.9%
Type of Staff	Administrative	38	13.2%
	HoD	39	13.6%
	Non-Teaching Staff	129	44.9%
	Teaching	81	28.2%
Age	20-30	26	9.1%

Education	31-40	85	29.6%
	41-50	120	41.8%
	50+	56	19.5%
	Secondary	21	7.3%
	Diploma	110	38.3%
	Under graduate	105	36.6%
	Post Graduate	44	15.3%
Experience	Other	7	2.4%
	< 5	17	5.9%
	5 - 10	70	24.4%
	10+	200	69.7%
Number of years worked	< 5	156	54.4%
	5 - 10	39	13.6%
	10+	92	32.1%

### Link between Work Environment and Employee Performance

Correlation analysis was used to determine the link between work environment and employee performance. As shown in Table 2, there was a weak positive correlation between work environment and employee performance which was statistically significant,  $r(285) = .216, p < 0.05$ . The positive coefficient means that there is a

direct relationship: when work environment is conducive, employee performance increases and therefore work environment is an important predictor of employee performance in public middle level TIVET institutions in Kenya. The results of correlation analysis did not support the null hypothesis developed in this study.

**Table 2: Correlation between Employee performance (dependent variable) and work environment (independent variable)**

		Employee Performance	Work Environment
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.216**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	287	287
Work Environment	Pearson Correlation	.216**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	287	287

**Table 3: ANOVA results from comparison analysis (Work environment)**

Item	F	Sig.
I have necessary working tools	1.084	.356
Adequate resources available	.565	.639
Enjoy good interpersonal relationship	8.335	.000
Good communication	8.461	.000
Regular feedback	8.475	.000
Less noise at workplace	3.893	.009
Given incentives	.437	.727
Safety rules and procedures	.570	.635
Working Space	1.280	.281
Provided with protective clothing	1.106	.347
Institution is respectful	1.638	.181

### Work Environment

The results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) regarding work environment are set out in Table 3 below, which illustrates that there was significant differences in work environment item scores with regard to Interpersonal relationships in the institution,  $F(3, 283) = 8.335, p = .000$  between individuals in the various job categories. There was also significant differences between the various job categories as regards communication with leaders,  $F(3, 283) = 8.461, p = .000$ .

Similarly, there was significant differences between the various job categories as regards feedback from leaders,  $F(3, 283) = 8.475, p = .000$  and noise in the workplace,  $F(3, 283) = 3.893, p = .009$ . The results of Scheffé's post hoc multiple comparisons in table 4 below indicate that there was statistically significant differences between the administrative staff and the non-teaching staff in relation to interpersonal relationships in the institution ( $p = .023$ ). Administrative staff felt that interpersonal relationships were better as compared to non-teaching staff. The mean scores

on this item were: Administrative (3.13) and Non-Teaching Staff (2.55). Similarly there were statistically significant differences between HODs and Non-teaching staff ( $p=0.000$ ). The mean

scores were HODs (3.38) and Non-Teaching Staff (2.55). Heads of Departments (HODs) felt that interpersonal relationships were better as compared to non-teaching staff.

**Table 4: Scheffe's Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of job categories in Relation to perceptions on interpersonal relationships**

(I) Type of Staff	(J) Type of Staff	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Administrative	HoD	-.253	.231	.752
	Non-Teaching Staff	.581*	.187	.023
	Teaching	.354	.199	.369
HoD	Administrative	.253	.231	.752
	Non-Teaching Staff	.834*	.185	.000
	Teaching	.607*	.197	.025
Non-Teaching Staff	Administrative	-.581*	.187	.023
	HoD	-.834*	.185	.000
	Teaching	-.227	.143	.474
Teaching	Administrative	-.354	.199	.369
	HoD	-.607*	.197	.025
	Non-Teaching Staff	.227	.143	.474

The results of Scheffé's post hoc multiple comparisons table 5 below indicate that there was statistically significant differences between the administrative staff and the non-teaching staff in relation to communication with leaders ( $p = .018$ ). Administrative staff felt that there was good communication with leaders compared to non-teaching staff. The mean scores on this item were: Administrative (3.16) and Non-Teaching

Staff (2.53). Similarly there were statistically significant differences between HODs and Non-teaching staff ( $p=0.000$ ). The mean scores were HODs (3.41) and Non-Teaching Staff (2.53). Heads of Departments (HODs) felt that there was good communication with leaders as compared to non-teaching staff.

**Table 5: Scheffe's Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of job categories in Relation to communication with leaders**

(I) Type of Staff	(J) Type of Staff	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Administrative	HoD	-.252	.244	.784
	Non-Teaching Staff	.631*	.197	.018
	Teaching	.318	.210	.515
HoD	Administrative	.252	.244	.784
	Non-Teaching Staff	.883*	.195	.000
	Teaching	.571	.208	.060
Non-Teaching Staff	Administrative	-.631*	.197	.018
	HoD	-.883*	.195	.000
	Teaching	-.312	.152	.238
Teaching	Administrative	-.318	.210	.515
	HoD	-.571	.208	.060
	Non-Teaching Staff	.312	.152	.238

The results of Scheffé's post hoc multiple comparisons table 6 below indicate that there was statistically significant differences between the administrative staff and the non-teaching staff in relation to feedback from leaders ( $p = .000$ ). Administrative staff felt that feedback from leaders was better as compared to the non-teaching staff. The mean scores on this item were: Administrative (3.50) and Non-Teaching Staff (2.47). Similarly there were statistically significant differences between Administrative staff and teaching staff ( $p=0.030$ ). The mean scores were administrative (3.50) and Teaching

Staff (2.81). Administrative staff felt that feedback from leaders was better as compared to the teaching. The results of Scheffé's post hoc multiple comparisons table 7 below indicate that there was statistically significant differences between the administrative staff and the non-teaching staff in relation to noise distractions at the workplace ( $p = .026$ ). Administrative staff felt that there was less noise distractions at the workplace as compared to the non-teaching staff. The mean scores on this item were: Administrative (3.50) and Non-Teaching Staff (2.85).

**Table 6: Scheffe's Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of job categories in Relation to feedback from the leaders**

(I) Type of Staff	(J) Type of Staff	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Administrative	HoD	.526	.264	.267
	Non-Teaching Staff	1.035*	.214	.000
	Teaching	.685*	.227	.030
HoD	Administrative	-.526	.264	.267
	Non-Teaching Staff	.509	.211	.124
	Teaching	.160	.225	.919
Non-Teaching Staff	Administrative	-1.035*	.214	.000
	HoD	-.509	.211	.124
	Teaching	-.350	.164	.211
Teaching	Administrative	-.685*	.227	.030
	HoD	-.160	.225	.919
	Non-Teaching Staff	.350	.164	.211

**Table7: Scheffe's Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of job categories in Relation to noise distractions at the workplace**

(I) Type of Staff	(J) Type of Staff	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Administrative	HoD	.295	.261	.735
	Non-Teaching Staff	.647*	.211	.026
	Teaching	.290	.225	.647
HoD	Administrative	-.295	.261	.735
	Non-Teaching Staff	.352	.209	.420
	Teaching	-.005	.223	1.000
Non-Teaching Staff	Administrative	-.647*	.211	.026
	HoD	-.352	.209	.420
	Teaching	-.357	.162	.187
Teaching	Administrative	-.290	.225	.647
	HoD	.005	.223	1.000
	Non-Teaching Staff	.357	.162	.187

## Summary and Conclusion

The review shows that for employees to be able to work better, it is the duty of leaders to provide them with working tools and in a good working environment. When work environment is conducive, employee performance increases and therefore work environment is an important predictor of employee performance in public middle level TIVET institutions in Kenya. The results shows that there was significant differences in work environment item scores between individuals in the various job categories with regard to interpersonal relationships, communication with leaders, feedback from leaders and noise in the workplace as shown in tables 3-7. The study shows that if only employer could treat their employees as human with ability to doing well, then the results would be good. In a majority of institutions, the safety and health of employees in the workplace had not been adequately addressed. Findings from this study imply that some institutions are in urgent need to improve the working conditions in order to provide a better working environment for employees to perform better. Special

considerations and allocation from the Ministries are needed so as to enhance the working conditions and the institutions physical conditions.

The results corroborate the findings by Robbins that employees will perform better if they get continuous feedback in terms of how well they are progressing toward their goals. The results agree with the findings by Maslow's physiological needs, the most basic needs for food, water, and other factors necessary for survival. Security needs include needs for safety in one's physical environment, stability, and freedom from emotional distress. Belongingness needs relate to desires for friendship, love, and acceptance within a given community of individuals. Esteem needs are those associated with obtaining the respect of one's self and others. According to the implications of the hierarchy, individuals must have their lower level needs met by, for example, safe working conditions, adequate pay to take care of one's self and one's family, and job security before they will be motivated by increased job responsibilities, status, and challenging work assignments.

## Recommendations

The results suggest that institutions should establish effective communication across all levels of the institution. In public sector institutions such type government policies should be adapted which support team efforts inside the organization. In this way overall organizational productivity and effectiveness can be enhanced. It is important to develop such an atmosphere where employees are well satisfied with their jobs and cooperative with each other. In this way employees will be in position to utilize their full potential in their jobs. The research study strongly suggests that the teamwork activities must exist in the organizational environment. In this way employees performance can be enhanced. Results and findings indicated that Directorate of Technical Accreditations and Quality Assurance

(DTAQA) with the help of the ministries to make sure institutions have enough physical facilities, tools and equipment to improve the standards for training of technical employees and be checked regularly to improve quality and productivity. The Government of Kenya should allocate more funds to the Ministries with technical institutions so as to be able to employ more employees to cater for the deficit. The Government of Kenya should harmonize their salary with that of other civil servants so as to attract and retain skilled and experienced employees in the institution. The results and findings indicated that Human Resource Management can improve on health and safety of employees by providing an environment that is conducive for employees.

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