

Influence of Delegating Leadership on Employee Performance at the International Airports in Kenya

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Abstract

The type of stewardship engaged by the senior management of a firm has a direct bearing on the employee performance. There is no ideal style of leadership that fits all organizations and hence the top echelon has to select the most appropriate bearing that will drive the firm in the desired direction and bear the sought after outcomes. Several airports in Africa today continue to experience low employee performance as a result of the type of leadership selected by the top management and hence the need for diligence when picking the type of stewardship to be deployed in African Airports. This paper sought to establish the influence of delegation on employee performance at four international airports in Kenya, namely: Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi; Moi International Airport, Mombasa; Kisumu International Airport and Eldoret International Airport. Positivism philosophy was preferred in this study because it advocates for the use of accurate and verifiable evidence that is free from assumptions and opinions of the researcher. A survey research was used to conduct the study. The respondents were first line; middle level and senior level managers of the five departments involved in the processing of air passengers within the four international airports in Kenya. These were; airport security employees, port health and quarantine services employees, passenger airlines operating within the four international airports in Kenya employees, immigration and border control employees and finally the customs services employees. Data was gathered from primary sources using self-administered structured questionnaires. The data analysis was done using descriptive and inferential statistics. From the Linear regression, the value of p was established as $p < .05$ (p value of 0.00 and $\beta = 0.474$) and therefore the null hypothesis was rejected indicating that delegation has a significant impact on employee performance.

Key words: Leadership Styles, Delegating Leadership, Employee Motivation and Employee Performance.

Introduction

Delegation describes the tactic of a supervisor allocating tasks and activities that belong to the office of a senior office to that of a lower office. Delegation entails sharing of activities of a superior office among the subordinates with the intention of splitting and distributing tasks to different employees to improve efficiency and to allow the skills transfer to take place (Constantin & Petrućia, 2019).

The leader delegates the supervisory and leadership roles of units or departments to the team leaders and remains with the task of receiving reports and general support of the various activities as recommended by the section heads (Walls, 2019). This is recommended in a situation where the staff are well trained, well-motivated and highly committed. It requires the leadership to show open trust and willingness to allow the staff to work without direct supervision. This calls for the leaders to maintain a good distance from the staff to allow

them to work without the senior managers being present at the work stations (Thompson & Glasø, 2018).

Ridlwani et al. (2021), argued that when the employees are highly skilled and highly motivated, what is left for the leader is to create a strong organizational culture that ensures that the high employee performance is retained and well supported. They noted that the leader should avoid direct supervision so as not to disrupt the high performance or intimidate the already well inspired employees who do not require the physical presence of the leader to perform.

Literature Review

Delegation describes the action by a senior officer to allow a junior employee to carry out the tasks that officially belong to the office of a senior officer (Zhao et al., 2020). Delegation allows tasks to be shared among two or more people and hence the advantage of having the tasks completed in a shorter time, greatly improving efficiency. The trust bestowed by the supervisor to the subordinate does not only give the confidence to the employees but also allows them to learn the art and skills of leadership (Wong & Chan, 2020). Ugoani (2020), argued that when delegation is not done in writing, there is a risk of either the subordinate omitting some of the tasks that they should have carried out or overstepping their mandate. There are also some supervisors who are malicious and occasionally take disciplinary measures on subordinates on delegated activities when they are not comprehensively done due to miscommunication or due to a misunderstanding between the supervisor and the subordinates (Ugoani, 2020).

Delegation as an Enabling Tool

Managing the passenger processing activities involves emotional labour. Emotional labour is described as any job that involves providing custom-made services using your own initiatives and positive personality. Emotional labor entails deploying your pleasant characteristics to meet the customers' needs and to improve the possibility of a repeat purchase. In their study on the challenges of handling of travelling customers at Hong Kong airport, Wen et al. (2019), carried out a study to establish the factors that highly support efficiency. They assessed five critical factors that normally face employees handling travelling air passengers namely; right skills, good remuneration, working equipment and tools, working environment and delegation by the supervisors. Wen et al. (2019), used a sample of 300 respondents made up of airport employees who play the greatest role in conveyance of departing and arriving air passengers. The response rate was 60%. Wen et al. (2019), discovered that other than having the right equipment which scored 41%, delegation was the second most important factor at 35% since it allowed employees to design suitable solutions to the problems they faced when handling departing and arriving air passenger because it allowed them to come up with solutions without having to refer to the supervisors.

Delegating and Service Delivery Efficiency

Fear of losing influence by the senior managers is the biggest barrier to delegation. Senior officers who believe that empowered employees will no longer seek approval from them before taking any action will not readily delegate. Such supervisors will always feel that they will be rendered redundant upon delegation to their juniors (Bani-Melhem et al., 2020). The fact that nobody keeps referring to the supervisor's office for permission and consultation makes some supervisors interpret this as a threat to their job security and hence the hesitation to delegate. In their study on the unwillingness by supervisors to delegate among front office workers in Sharjah's hospitality industry from a sample of 192 front counter supervisors, they established that most supervisors were not ready to delegate as this made them invisible and all the recognition and appreciation went to employees who actually attended to customers. Bani-Melhem et al. (2020), also noted that when customers were asked to complete after sales

questionnaires to indicate the level of service they got, they always quoted the names of employees who served them and frequently recommended for promotion thereby creating more anxiety among supervisors.

Facilitating Skills Transfer by Delegating

When employees are allowed to perform the roles of their supervisors, it allows them to undertake a leadership apprenticeship program from within the organization so as to enable the subordinates to improve their leadership skills. Before subordinates are allocated a supervisor's task, they are normally provided with aptitude sessions which involves training and coaching thereby setting the stage for skills transfer. By performing senior office activities, employees are able to replicate all the skills they have learnt from their seniors and put them into practice in a familiar environment. This involves carrying out all the tasks devolved to them without direct supervision and then make monthly, quarterly or annual reports over all the tasks and responsibilities delegated to them at the end of the season (Abdi & Njuguna, 2020). According to Hassan (2020), delegation involves skills transfer at a lower cost as compared to sending the employees to a training institution. By delegating, the supervisor makes the employees feel confident to perform and learn both technical and leadership skills while they are within the comfort of the organization premises and without the risk of being accused of in-subordination.

Delegation as an Organizational Succession Tool

Delegation in organizations by its own design creates future leaders. The moment subordinate employees are allowed to perform the role of their supervisors and without direct supervision, they are empowered to learn all the skills of leadership and successfully take over from the supervisor in case of exit (Gassas et al., 2018). Sun (2018), argued that for an employee to understand the organization's culture and decision making process at the senior level, they require to practice all the functions of the senior officers well in advance and hence the need for delegation. This allows the employees to indulge in critical decision making of the firm leadership and hence makes it very easy for them to undertake leadership roles in future. In their study on the effectiveness of delegation as an enabler of succession in the health service industry in the United States of America, Kaslow et al. (2018), determined that in cases where the management has a habit of delegation as organizational culture, they experience smooth succession flow and witness low incidents of interruption of service as a result of change of office holders.

Delegation as a Strategy to Improve Team Work

Teams are well defined groups of people that undertake activities together with one agreed common goal. For a team to be successful, they have to bring all their diversified skills together to create synergy. For a team to achieve her goals, a supervisor has to delegate accordingly to allow them to function without bottlenecks that normally face the employees as they await approval from a supervisor to proceed to the next step upon completion of the first step. Where a supervisor has delegated accordingly, has given clear instructions and has availed all the required resources, the probability of the team succeeding or even exceeding expectation is guaranteed (Cronley & Kim, 2017).

Delegation as a Strategy to Improve Organization's Image

As globalization takes root in the 21st century, the reputation of a firm is of ultimate importance. When products or services are delivered on time and meet or exceed the customer's expectations, a good image is built. When the same customer orders the same goods or services and the delivery is delayed or the quality does not meet the customer's expectations, the image is dented or lost and in the worst case scenario, the firm is sued for causing a customer to incur losses and inconveniences (Crhova & Matoskova, 2019).

In their empirical study on job satisfaction, job performance and employee retention in the Jordanian service sector, Abuhashesh et al. (2019), wanted to determine if job satisfaction improves employee output and job retention in the service sector in Jordan. The study targeted 10 companies in the service sector with at least 1,000 employees in the 3 lowest salary grades in the 10 companies. A sample size of 150 employees was used. The response rate was 53%. The study established that satisfied employees improved their output in terms of man-hours by 20%, the quality of products and services improved by 30% while the employee retention rate went up by 16%. The three factors led to more satisfied customers who subsequently viewed the firm positively and the customer retention rate increased by 21% (Abuhashesh et al., 2019).

Methodology

The research philosophy used in this study is positivism. According to Chandra and Hareendran (2017), positivism research philosophy demands that before a conclusion is made in any scientific study, several tests are done using the same methodology such that all of them give similar outcome. Positivism is a philosophy that heavily depends on impartial and verifiable facts. Positivism philosophy was preferred in this study because of its accuracy in an empirical study where the raw data is collected in numerical values (Bell et al., 2022).

The respondents in this study came from Jomo Kenyatta, Moi, Eldoret and Kisumu International airports. The target population is composed of the first line, middle level and senior level managers who supervise the shift team leaders who interact directly with the transiting, arriving and departing air passengers at the four international airports in Kenya. The first line, middle level and senior level managers of the five departments were selected because of the fact that they possess information of interest to the study, based on their job functions as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Target Population Distribution across the 4 Airports

No. of Employees at Each Level	Jomo Kenyatta Inter. Airport	Eldoret Inter. Airport	Moi Inter. Airport	Kisumu Inter. Airport	Total
Senior Managers	16	06	08	05	35
Middle Level Managers	44	22	36	14	116
First Line Managers	224	109	167	43	543
Total	284	137	211	62	694

Source: (Kenya Bureau of Statistics, 2022)

Results and Discussions

The response rate, calculated as the percentage of respondents out of the total target population, was 42.5% as shown on Table 2. This indicates the proportion of individuals who completed and returned the questionnaires. Each survey questionnaire was coded to indicate the station and department from which it was received. The highest response rate was from JKIA (Jomo Kenyatta International Airport), with 95 questionnaires returned. However, this distribution did not bias the study's results, as JKIA houses over 35% of the total workforce, making a higher response rate expected from this station. This distribution aligns with the principle of

proportional representation in survey research, where larger segments of the population naturally contribute more responses. Therefore, the higher response rate from JKIA, particularly from the airport security department, is a reflection of its larger workforce size rather than any bias in the data collection process.

From the study, it was established that delegation by the leadership was not widely practiced. It was further observed that 50% of the respondents who reported the presence of frequent delegation also stated that delegation improved service delivery. The results showed that in the departments with frequent delegation the employees have a better view of the efficiency of delegation in improving performance.

Table 2. Response Rate across Stations and Departments

	JKIA	Eldoret International Airport	Moi International Airport	Kisumu International Airport	Total	Percentage
Senior Level Managers	11	13	10	19	53	17.9
Middle level Managers	34	20	26	20	100	33.9
First Line Managers	50	31	32	29	142	48.2
Total	95	64	68	68	295	100%

Validity and Reliability Tests

The study employed Cronbach’s Alpha method in assessing reliability of the survey instrument. This method was preferred because it provides a measure of internal consistency, which is essential for determining the extent to which the items in a scale consistently measure the same underlying construct. Cronbach’s Alpha calculates the average correlation among all possible combinations of items in a scale, with higher values indicating greater internal consistency. This method was preferred because it offers a comprehensive assessment of reliability that accounts for the interrelatedness of items within a scale, ensuring that the scale is dependable and consistent in measuring the intended construct.

The study measured validity using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. The AVE value assesses convergent validity by comparing the amount of variance shared among the items of a scale with the amount of variance unique to each item. A higher AVE value indicates that a greater proportion of the variance in the items is attributable to the underlying construct rather than measurement error. This approach was found to be the best because it offers a robust indication of the extent to which a scale measures the intended construct, ensuring that the items are sufficiently related to each other and reflect the construct of interest accurately.

The composite reliability values, notably achieving 0.850, signify exceptional reliability of the data. This indicates that the collected data consistently measures the fundamental concept of delegation by the leadership, showcasing a high level of internal consistency and dependability.

Similarly, the validity of the data is affirmed by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value, which reaches 0.559. This value surpasses the 0.5 threshold, denoting satisfactory content validity. Hence, the data collected accurately represents the intended construct, ensuring that the measurements effectively capture the core aspects of delegation by the leadership. These findings validate the reliability and validity of the data collected for the factor analysis of selling leadership, bolstering confidence in the study's outcomes and implications.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	Number of Items	Items removed
.850	.559	10	0

Levene's Homogeneity of Variance Test for Delegation

Homogeneity of variance test is an assessment carried out to determine if the value of the error term changes significantly as the value of the independent variable changes in a regression analysis. If the error term varies significantly (p-value greater than 0.05) with change in the value of the predictor variable, the accuracy of the null hypothesis becomes low and hence the need for the homogeneity of variance test.

Table 4 below presents the results of the Levene's test of equality of error variances, which is used to assess whether the variance of an independent variable (delegation) is equal across different groups defined by various measures (mean, median, median with adjusted degree of freedom and trimmed mean). The p-value for the median with adjusted degrees of freedom lies between 0.046 and 0.048 indicating that the accuracy of the null hypothesis is high and within the acceptable limits (below 0.05).

Table 4. Levene's Test for Equality of Error Variances

Measures	Levene's Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	2.457	4	290	.046
Based on Media	2.273	4	290	.048
Based on Median with adjusted df	2.273	4	287.188	.047
Based on Trimmed Mean	2.215	4	290	.047

The KMO test resulted in a value of 0.782, indicating satisfactory sampling adequacy. Furthermore, the significant Bartlett's test result ($X^2(45) = 1660.184, p < .05$) further strengthens the appropriateness of delegation by the leadership as the independent variable for extraction. These findings suggest that the data were suitable for factor extraction, given that the KMO measure exceeded 0.6 and the Bartlett's test yielded statistically significant results ($p < .05$). The reliability test was carried out using the Cronbach's Alpha test where a value 0.850 was obtained, way above the required threshold of 0.70 or above while the validity test was carried out using the average variance extracted (AVE) test giving a value of .559 which is above the threshold of .5 and hence the content validity was confirmed to exist.

The validity test was carried out using the KMO and Bartlett's test. The KMO test results gave a value of 0.782, indicating satisfactory sampling adequacy. Furthermore, the significant

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Inferential Statistics

The model summary in Table 5 offers insights into the influence of delegation by the leadership on employee performance within international airports in Kenya. The correlation coefficient is .643a, indicating a moderately strong positive correlation between delegation by the leadership and employee performance. The R^2 is .414, meaning that approximately 41.4% of the variability in employee performance can be explained by delegation by the leadership. The value of .395 indicates that about 39.5% of the variability in employee performance is explained by delegation by the leadership. The model suggests that delegation by the leadership significantly influences employee performance within international airports in Kenya, with delegation explaining a substantial portion (around 41.4% to 39.5%) of the variability in employee performance scores.

Table 5. Model Summary for Delegation by the Leadership and Employee Performance

Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.643 ^a	.414	.395	.63830

The ANOVA table provided in Table 6 offers insights into the relationship between delegation by the leadership and employee performance. The value of 82.000 represents the total variability in employee performance that the regression model can account for. The F-value of 22.363 is the ratio of the explained variability (mean square of regression) to the unexplained variability (mean square of residuals). The p-value of .000 indicates the probability of observing the results (or more extreme results) under the assumption that the regression model has no predictive power. The findings from the ANOVA table indicate that delegation by the leadership has a significant impact on employee performance, as indicated by the low p-value (Sig. < .000) in the regression model. This suggests that delegation by the leadership is a strong predictor of employee performance within the context being studied. This finding aligns with the results presented by Ammari et al. (2017) who points to the success of organizations as a result of delegation. They agree that a supervisor who assigns tasks that belong to a higher office to their subordinates to undertake and then report back to the supervisor allows them to grow professionally and be in a position to take over the functions of the senior officer in future in case of an exit from the organization or if they vacate their current office and take another position in the same organization. This not only allows smooth succession in a firm but also motivates the staff to be proactive because they have been entrusted with tasks of a higher office.

Table 6. ANOVA for Delegation by the Leadership and Employee Performance

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	82.000	9	9.111	22.363	.000 ^b
	Residual	116.116	285	.407		
	Total	198.115	294			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Delegation by the Leadership

The Chi-Square Tests in Table 7 provides insights into the association between delegation by the leadership and the performance of employees. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 69.114 with 16 degrees of freedom and the significance level (p-value) is .000. This indicates a significant association between delegation by the leadership and employee performance. The Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square value is 72.868 with 16 degrees of freedom and the significance level (p-value) is .000. Similarly, this test indicates a significant association between delegation by the leadership and employee performance. The Linear-by-Linear Association Chi-Square value is 25.688 with 1 degree of freedom, and the significance level (p-value) is .000. This indicates a significant linear association between delegation by the leadership and employee performance. Overall, the Pearson Chi-Square, Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square and Linear-by-Linear Association Chi-Square tests all suggest a significant association between delegation by the leadership and employee performance.

Table 7. Chi-Square Tests for Delegation by the Leadership and Employee Performance

Category	Chi-Square Tests		
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	69.114 ^a	16	.000

Likelihood Ratio	72.868	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	25.688	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	295		

a. 9 cells (36.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .17.

Conclusion

This study conceptualizes delegation as the supervisor's ability and willingness to empower and trust the competence of their subordinates subsequently assigning them tasks that belong to a senior officer's docket. The study findings indicate a significant linear association between delegation by the leadership in all the four airports and employee performance. From the foregoing results, it was established that delegating has a profound positive influence on employee performance and hence should be embraced.

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