



NON-PLACEMENT OF THE ON-JOB TRAINED EMPLOYEES ON THEIR PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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Cite this article:

Awino, M., Shitsinzi, R. (2025), Non-Placement of the On-Job Trained Employees on their Performance in Public Universities in Kenya. British Journal of Management and Marketing Studies 8(1), 106-117. DOI: 10.52589/BJMMS-SAXBQF5M

Manuscript History

Received: 29 Nov 2024

Accepted: 5 Jan 2025

Published: 10 Feb 2025

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ABSTRACT: Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) is one institution that sponsors its administrative staff in various trainings such as on-job training. These trainings aim to ensure that employees remain relevant in their jobs. As a result, employees leave to look for greener pastures thus high turnover rates. This paper, therefore, attempts to investigate the effects of non-placement of the on-job-trained employees on their performance. The study was anchored on the Theory of Performance utilizing the case study approach with a total sample size of 149 respondents. A structured questionnaire and an interview schedule were used for data collection. Quantitative data was analysed descriptively while qualitative data was analysed thematically. From the findings, it was inferred that most respondents agreed that non-placement could affect job performance. The study concludes that employees perform optimally when they are well-placed. The study recommends that institutions should ensure that they hire qualified and competent administrative staff and also endorse policies on the appropriate placement of employees.

KEYWORDS: Job Placement, Non-Placement, On-Job Training, Performance.



INTRODUCTION

This study focused on the Human Resource Development (HRD) problem of not being able to correctly place on-the-job trained employees and its effects on job performance. The university HRD policy of On-Job Training (OJT) can enable staff to cope with the dynamics of a competitive higher education environment (Krücken, 2021). The lack of an empirically derived understanding of the effects of non-placement makes it difficult for universities to evaluate their investment in HRD results in enhanced employee performance. It is against this background that the current study aims to establish whether university policy offering OJT enhances the job performance of the employees or not. By establishing the frequency of OJT and the extent of non-placement of the on-job trained employees and its effect on their job performance, universities can be better placed to evaluate the effectiveness of their HRD policies that focus on OJT.

It is acknowledged that there is a positive relationship between HRD practices and employee performance (Alsafadi, & Altahat, 2021; Alam, 2022; Anwar & Abdullah, 2021); Tessema and Soeters, 2006; and Akdere & Egan, 2020). For instance, it has been established that HRD practices such as training influence the performance of employees (Kumari, Sundari, Praseeda, Nagpal, & Awasthi, 2023; Judijanto, Harsono & Putra 2023). However, in developing countries, some specific challenges restrict and affect the role of HRD practices. For instance, Ghebregiorgis and Karsten (2006) found out that in Eritrea, economic conditions, political instability, and environmental uncertainty affect HRD practices. On the other hand, Lundgren, & Poell, (2023) observes that in Nigeria HRD practices, such as training and development, are mostly exercised by HR professionals.

The question of whether training increases job performance within universities has preoccupied academics recently. For instance, Lu, Zhang, M. Yang, & Wang, (2023) examined the effect of human resource management practices in enhancing employee performance in Catholic institutions of higher learning in Kenya. Although this study did not focus on the placement of trained employees, it established that training and employee empowerment had the effect of increasing employees' levels of performance. Neither did this study focus on whether not being placed affected their job performance.

LITERATURE/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Sikalumbi and Situmba (2021) argue that there is a loss of competitiveness for firms when skills are in short supply, or when under-qualified employees are assigned duties. The reason is that wage rates are bid up and production bottlenecks occur. Pouliakas and Wruuck, (2022) and Mulé and Rizza, (2023) emphasized the chances that coordination failures between workers and firms and a shortage of available skilled labour may result in the convergence of the economy to a low-skill equilibrium from which it is difficult to recover.

A comprehensive analysis that separates the long-term and short-term consequences of non-placement can be obtained by investigating the productivity of individual companies. However, very few studies have applied firm-level data as part of their analysis. Until recently, Sabokro, Masud, and Kayedian, (2021) study has been the sole attempt to measure productivity effects



using this approach. Non-placement demonstrates that over-qualification harms firm output because of its detrimental impact on job satisfaction.

Malim, (2021) examined the effect of an over-skilling variable on five indicators of firm performance. These were financial performance, product quality, absence, quits, and labour productivity using the British Workplace Employment Relations Survey of 2004. He found evidence of a positive relationship between over-skilling and some productive aggregates. It was found that higher average education levels and over-qualification are found to be positively related to higher labour productivity. However, this positive productivity effect is muted by the important positive effect of over-skilling on quit rates.

This study is grounded on the Theory of Performance by Elger (2011) which states that performance develops and relates concepts to form a framework that can be used to explain results as well as improvements. According to Elger, to perform is to produce valued results, and further developing performance is a journey, and the level of performance describes the location in the journey. This theory exactly connects with the present investigation since the study embraces the determination of administrative staff's performance.

According to this theory, performance is determined in terms of capability increase, capacity increase, cost of doing business, and quantity increase. Elger (2011) defines performance as taking a complex series of actions, which integrates knowledge and skills, aimed at producing valuable results. A distinction is made between individual and group performance noting that in some instances, the performer is an individual and in other instances, the performer is a collection of people, who are collaborating such as a department, research team, committee, or a business.

As a department in a company improves its level of performance, the members of the department can produce more effective products, more effective customer service, and more effective results. As a manager advances his level of performance, he can organize people and resources more effectively and get higher-quality results in a shorter time. It's expected that the employee's level of performance increases if one is given the tasks related to the training he/she underwent. As stated by Elger, developing performance is a journey, that according to this study, should involve the level of employee training and proper placement of employees. However, the connection between non-placement of the on-job trained employees and employee performance has been the subject of an important and ongoing discourse in HRD. Regarding this study, the researcher sought to investigate the effects of non-placement of the on-job trained employees on their performance at MMUST.

METHODOLOGY

A concurrent triangulation and case study design was used in this research. A case study determines factors and relationships among the factors that have resulted in the behaviour under study and makes a detailed examination of it Gioia, (2021). This method was important in giving detailed and in-depth information and emphasizing the effects of non-placement of the on-job trained employees on their performance.



a. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study consisted of all the 149 administrative staff who were purposively selected. Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, & Walker (2020) state that purposive sampling which is also known as deliberate or convenience sampling allows researchers to use cases that have the required information concerning the objectives of their study. The idea was to pick out the sample concerning some criterion, thus considered important for this study. This method is appropriate when the study places special emphasis on the control of certain specific variables and the use of the best available knowledge concerning the sample subjects.

b. Data Collection Instruments

The study utilized both questionnaire and interview schedule as the main tools for collecting data which was guided by the nature of data to be collected, the time available as well as by the objectives of the study. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and was presented verbatim according to the themes while quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using percentages and frequency distribution techniques. Before the research, the validity of the research instruments was established through consultation with supervisors. Their opinions were used to improve the instrument. The test-retest technique was used to test the reliability of the research instruments.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

i. Whether Non-Placement Affects Performance

The respondents were asked to state whether non-placement affects their performance. From the interview schedules, it was clear that non-placement affects job performance significantly. The registrars who were interviewed expressed concern over the non-placement of employees and how the same affects performance. According to one of them, he said thus:

Due to non-placement, employees tend to be demotivated, the tendency of employees not to perform well is high, there is high staff turnover, and there will be perpetual complaints from the administrative staff. (**Oral Interview, MMUST, 23rd March 2015**)

This is in agreement with the findings in Bedemariam, & Ramos, (2021) that there is a high turnover of over-educated employees. This also agrees with the findings in the studies carried out by de Jager, Verhagen, & Bergmans, (2024) and Shi et al. (2023) who associate non-placement with job dissatisfaction which may result in lower work effort, greater turnover and absenteeism. The above sentiments spell the kind of effect that may arise due to the non-placement of employees once they have acquired some level of knowledge and skills. Similar sentiments were uttered by the other key informants when one of them said that:

Overqualified employees tend to relax when they know they are overqualified and are not well placed, that is, they do not take their work seriously and this can cause an institution severe loss. When administrative staff are not well placed, they tend to look for greener pastures where they can get better jobs. When employees are not well placed they feel demotivated and are not so keen on their work. (**Oral Interview, MMUST, 24th March 2015**)



These are serious assertions that were expressed by senior members of the administrative staff of MMUST which held significant levels of truth.

Similarly, the other respondents were asked about the effects of non-placement at their places of work and they had the following responses as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Non-placement Affects My Job Performance

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	37	26.6
Agree	68	48.9
Undecided	9	6.5
Disagree	23	16.5
Strongly Disagree	2	1.4
Total	139	100.0

A cumulative 68(48.9%) of the respondents agreed that non-placement affects their performance. Another 37(26.6%) strongly agreed that non-placement affects their performance. Only 2(1.4%) strongly disagreed with the fact that non-placement affects their performance while 6.5% were undecided. This implies that most of the respondents agree with the fact that non-placement affects the total output of the administrative staff. According to More, (2024), he states that as a consequence of frustration, over-educated employees are less productive than their correctly allocated colleagues.

The same question was asked in a different way and the responses were as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Non-Placement Makes it Difficult to Perform Duties

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	36	25.9
Agree	58	41.7
Undecided	9	6.5
Disagree	31	22.3
Strongly Disagree	5	3.6
Total	139	100.0



A 58(41.7%) agreed that non-placement makes it difficult for them to perform their duties while another 36(25.9%) strongly agreed. Non-placement comes when one is not assigned duties or is not put in a position that matches his/her training. It is understandable if the majority of the respondents are in agreement with this assertion. Only 5(3.6%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the assertion that non-placement affects their performance at work. 6.5% were undecided.

This is indicative that the employees are over-qualified and therefore work looks simplistic. This demotivates them in their performance. To get the best performance from employees, there needs to be some sort of motivation that can come from job satisfaction. Effective motivation can create a productive workforce, but a lack of motivating factors can leave employees searching for reasons not to give their maximum effort. Research on the productivity of workers has shown that employees who are satisfied with their job will have higher job performance, and thus supreme job retention, than those who are not happy with their jobs (Nguyen, C. 2020). Further still, Susanto, Sawitri, Ali, & Rony, (2023) document that employee performance is higher in happy and satisfied workers and the management finds it easy to motivate high performers to attain firm targets.

Further, the employees have little or sometimes no commitment to their work such that they do not perform well. Commitment occurs when employers offer a competitive rate of pay and benefits package. This offers assistance in paying for employees' higher education and develops a regular TNA that keeps employees updated on the institution's changes. It also gives pertinent information for employees to do their jobs and upgrade equipment to make sure that employees have the most efficient technology available to do their work. The commitment shown by the institution is reciprocated in the form of commitment from employees.

ii. Whether the Respondents did their Work without Complaining

The study further sought to find out whether the respondents did their work without complaining because they were properly placed. The following were their responses as shown in Figure 1.

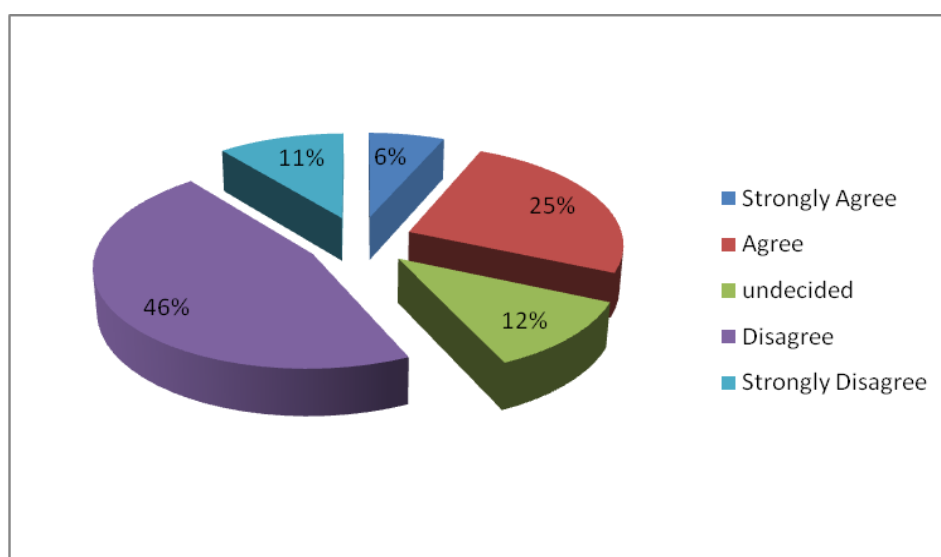


Fig. 1: Always Work Effectively because of Proper Placement

From the figure above, a majority of 46% disagreed that they always do their work without complaining because they are properly placed while another 11% strongly disagreed. Employees who are properly placed will indeed tend to be happy with their positions and hence perform optimally. 25% of the respondents agreed that they were well placed and hence not complaining. While 12% were undecided about the assertion.

These findings agree with the findings of Zegwaard, Adams-Hutcheson, & Freeman, (2024) and Hains-Wesson & Ji, (2024), who have associated non-placement with job dissatisfaction. This assertion clearly explains why some employees of MMUST mostly complained while working. Job dissatisfaction may result in lower work effort, greater turnover, and absenteeism. Notwithstanding, non-placement has also been linked with low participation in OJT as stated in the findings of Dean, & Rook, (2023). Further, this study concurs with the findings of Arar (2021), who asserted that non-placement demonstrates that over-qualification hurts firm output because of its detrimental impact on job satisfaction.

It can be argued further that the skill mismatch associated with job dissatisfaction in MMUST may result in employees imposing significant negative externalities on their co-workers and later undermine workplace morale and influence workplace norms.

iii. Whether Administrative Staff Loved Work

Further, the respondents were asked to assert whether they loved to be consistently accurate in all aspects of their work since their skills match the job requirements as shown in Figure 2.

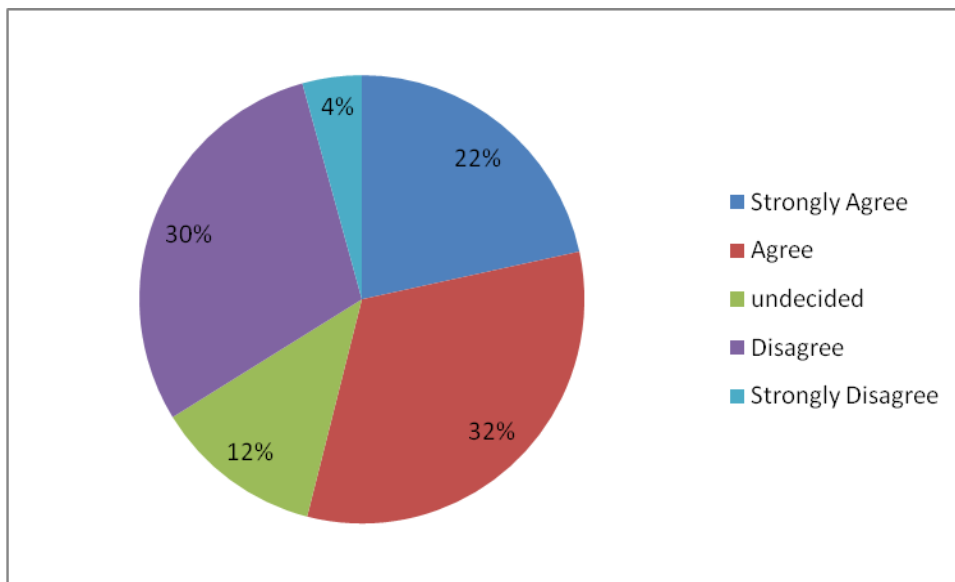


Fig. 2: Love of Work because Skills Match the Job

From the figure above, 32% of the respondents agreed that they love their work because their skills match the job while 30% of the respondents disagreed. 4% strongly agreed and 12% were undecided. The majority of the respondents therefore agreed that they did their best at their workplace because the skills that they have match the kind of duties assigned to them. On the other hand, those who do not agree may be implying that their needs are not being met by the management and that they are not empowered by the employer.

Whether Administrative Staff were committed to Work

Finally, the respondents were asked about their commitment to the work that they are doing as shown in Figure 3.

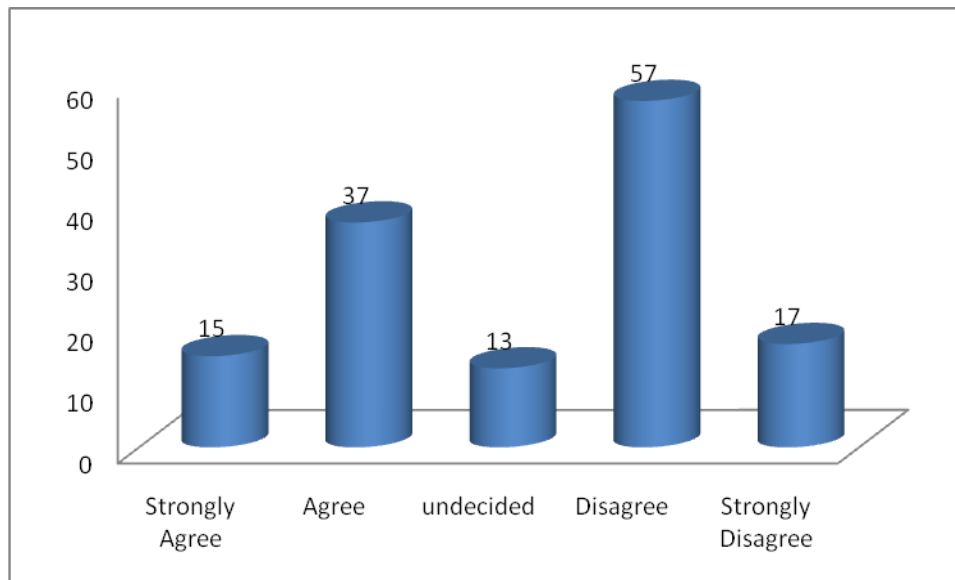


Fig. 3: Commitment to Work

A cumulative 57(41%) of the respondents disagreed that they are committed to work, meaning that they may not be well-placed while another 17(12.2%) strongly disagreed. Of the respondents, 15(10.8%) agreed that they are committed to their work because they are properly placed while 13(9.4%) of the respondents were undecided.

It emerged from the interview with the key informants that many administrative staff love their jobs but are not committed. This can be attributed to the fact that when employees acquire more knowledge and skills, they expect the employer to appreciate them through proper placement. However, when they realize that there is a mismatch between the acquired skills and knowledge, and job placement the employees feel demotivated. Hence their level of commitment reduces.

iv. Best Practices Enhancing Employee Performance

Given the above effects of non-placement of job performance, the researcher asked the key informants to elaborate on the best practices that enhance employees' performance. Coincidentally, they agreed on several ways to enhance the performance of employees, given the challenges that they face, including non-placement at their places of work. One of the key informants said thus:

There should be continued improvement of knowledge and skills through training. The institution should offer training to the employees annually, semi-annually or quarterly. This will enable the employees to gather the latest knowledge and skills needed in their job performance. (Oral Interview, MMUST, 24th March, 2015).



Mentorship of junior employees should be encouraged, that is, junior employees, to learn from the senior employees through training and learning. This will go a long way in teamwork to achieve the goals and objectives of the institution. Development initiative policies should be put in place which favours continual learning through the use of rewards. This means that the employees should be rewarded when they meet their goals and objectives. This means that they should be well motivated through good pay, awarded study leave with pay, and involved in decision-making.

There should be adequate remuneration commensurate to their work and level of knowledge and skills. After training, it is expected that the employees will possess more knowledge and skills. Thus, for these employees to feel and know that their efforts have been recognized, their remunerations should be reflective of their additional training. Another key informant said:

Administrative staff should be motivated by the use of the various channels of motivation. Such channels include team building activities, stipends for their extra efforts, short training, and job security among others. These will keep them committed to their current organization because they will feel appreciated. **(Oral Interview, MMUST, 24th March, 2015).**

These are the suggestions that the key informants gave in so far as enhancing the performance of administrative staff is concerned. The one that most appeared was training, which will result in an increment in the levels of knowledge and skills. It will thus require that after training, the administrative staff are properly placed.

v. Effects of Non-Placement of Administrative Staff on Performance

The key informants were further asked to make comments on what they thought about the non-placement of administrative staff and the effect it has on their performance. The following were their responses:

Employees should be well placed, especially the ones who are overqualified. They should be placed according to their qualifications, knowledge, and skills. Institutions should reward employees by offering promotions when employees get extra qualifications. Employers should also hire employees who possess the right qualifications, knowledge, and skills for the right positions **(Oral Interview, MMUST, 24th March 2015)**

Nonplacement should not occur, yet this is very common with public institutions. Universities are rigid institutions to place their employees well. Institutions should move over-qualified employees to the right grades. Instead of employing new employees, the over-qualified employees should be promoted to higher positions. When employees are not well placed, it leads to wasted resources, that is, in the case of over-qualified employees. The institution loses because they hire other employees when they already have qualified employees. Institutions should have regular appraisals of their employees so as to recommend those who have added qualifications that will improve the quality of their work. This is because qualifications are very important to employees and jobs should be given according to employee's qualifications. In conclusion, it is imperative that those who were not placed according to their qualifications were not happy with that reality and were equally not performing optimally. Therefore, non-placement affects job performance.



IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Organizations need to develop policies that offer guidance on the proper placement of employees as well as place them in their proper job groups, which has a measurable impact on the bottom line. This will reduce the effects of non-placement which makes it difficult for universities to evaluate their investment in HRD resulting in enhanced employee job performance. Well-placed employees will offer an ongoing value add in their performance through increased output and profits at the same time reducing turnover.

CONCLUSION

The study therefore concludes that on-the-job training is more likely to enhance optimal employee performance in public institutions and close the gaps between current performances and projected future performances in institutions.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research may address the review of other additional variables of on-the-job-trained employees and performance using either moderating or intervening variables, which may broaden the range of influence between these practices. Furthermore, a replication of similar studies should be carried out in other sectors and demonstrate the universality and significance of these constructs and how they relate to job performance in general.

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