



The Effect of Team Empowerment on Internal Customer Satisfaction at Kenyatta University

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Abstract: Service institutions are faced with the challenge of increased and complex customer demands which have to be satisfied in a highly competitive market. In such a competitive marketplace, the main strategy for the success of service institutions is customer satisfaction. For that matter, many institutions are seeking strategies to attract and retain their internal and external customers. Universities have experienced the challenges of staff turnover a clear indication of lack of satisfaction. Kenyatta University has had staff turnover over the recent past with the 2015 to 2019 academic years having lost a total of 189 staff members to other institutions. The teamwork environment plays a major role in internal customer staff satisfaction. This study aimed to determine the influence of team empowerment on internal customer satisfaction at Kenyatta University. The study used a descriptive research design and a target population that comprised 3,033 teaching and non-teaching staff of Kenyatta University. Stratified proportionate sampling was used in sampling where a sample size of 341 teaching and non-staff were selected. Questionnaires were used in data collection. A pilot study involving 30 participants was done to establish the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics mainly multiple regression techniques to ascertain the effect of the independent variable which is teamwork empowerment on the dependent variable which is internal customer satisfaction. Research findings were presented on tables and charts. Research findings indicated that team empowerment has an effect on internal customer satisfaction at Kenyatta University as the respondents agreed with the statements on the questionnaire. Multiple correlation results indicated a positive and significant correlation between team empowerment and internal customer satisfaction. Regression results indicated a positive and significant effect of team empowerment ($\beta_1 = 0.229$, $p = 0.019$) on internal customer satisfaction at Kenyatta University. The study concluded that team empowerment is a significant factor that affects internal customer satisfaction at Kenyatta University. The study recommends policy changes on regular training of employees, rewarding employees upon performance, and recognizing employees for good work. Also, as a service institution, Kenyatta University should adopt an effective model of training employees on the importance of having the right attitude towards achieving team goals, vision, and mission of the institution.

Keywords: Team Empowerment, Internal Customer Satisfaction, Kenyatta University.

1. INTRODUCTION

The globalization and digital revolution have led to a rapid increase in demand for new and varied disciplines and programs in the education sector (Simon & Gómez, 2013). This advancement in technology and globalization has also increased the ease at which people acquire information. In this case, almost all service institutions are involved in some form of competition that could either be for customers or scarce resources. The setting up of numerous new institutions has also intensified the competition, a scenario that is evident across all service institutions. Kenyatta University anchors its success on customer satisfaction and teamwork among its academic and non-academic staff. As an academic institution, a teamwork environment is critical between the departments, schools, campuses, and the overall university.

According to Lai, Li, and Lai (2013), there is a likely loss of customers in any organization that does not satisfy the customers as efficiently and effectively as its competitors. Customer satisfaction is a significant factor that determines if a customer will purchase a product again or not and whether the customer will recommend it to others. This study highlights the need for and gaps within the

teamwork environment in creating internal customer satisfaction at Kenyatta University. In an attempt to satisfy its internal customers, teamwork and motivation are required and are core to this end. Elnaga and Imran (2014) argued that customers who are not satisfied do not repurchase leading to lost income and loss of customer loyalty. The environment under which a team operates determines the team's performance which in turn affects internal customer satisfaction.

Organizations exist in an environment that is both physical and social and the constituents of the firm's environment impact the management of the firm. Furthermore, the teams in an organization exist in a work environment that impacts their performance. A team was described by Yalabik and Panteli (2015), as a group of persons working together to accomplish a common goal. In the case of Kenyatta University, the common goal is academic excellence and institutional growth. The work environment is everything that relates to an employee's involvement with the work.

Team empowerment is delegating power to a team to act independently in the interest of the customers (Vaughan & Slinger, 2013). It is a decentralized management strategy where team members have the power to make decisions, share information, and take action to achieve their corporate goals. It has been noted that there are an increased introduction and use of teams with most service institutions empowering team members to be innovative in solving problems (Kumar & James, 2015). According to Elnaga and Imran (2014), empowerment is one of the concepts considered vital to enable organizational teams to achieve a high notch of teamwork essence, independent thinking, self-confidence, and innovation. Teams can be empowered through various practices such as participating in decision making which allow team members to bring out their full potential and ensure customer satisfaction (Escudeiro & Escudeiro, 2013).

Customer satisfaction refers to the situation where the service provided meets the customer's needs and expectations (Bourne, 2016). This could result in institutional improvement in performance and better service delivery. For the case of Kenyatta University internal customer satisfaction and a positive teamwork environment can be indicated through; few staff turnover whereby lecturer transfer to other academic institutions, an increase in student enrolment at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, improved rating/ranking of the institution both locally and internationally due to internal performance which is a net result of staff and customer satisfaction. Kenyatta University has been improving in terms of customer satisfaction and confidence by increasing enrolments at the undergraduate level intake.

In the 2020-2021 intakes the university had the highest number of students joining public universities with an enrolment of 6733 (KUCCPS 2021 report). This is proof of student (customer) satisfaction with the university. Vanitha (2013) connotes that customer satisfaction is the result realized when service or product features meet the customer's needs and expectations. According to Lai, Li, and Lai, (2013), customer satisfaction is the pleasure experienced by a consumer when a product performs according to his or her expectations an aspect that this study aims to identify concerning Kenyatta University.

Internal customer satisfaction is a significant element in the enhancement of the productivity and success of the organization therein. In this case, organizations ought to understand the customer segments, needs, and preferences to develop strategies that fulfil these needs. Moreover, Bourne (2016) asserts that internal customer satisfaction allows institutions to derive customer loyalty; In the case of Kenyatta University, staff who are the internal customers develop this loyalty. This further leads to increased enrolment, increase in the number of programs as well as university rating in the region and globally.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although Kenyan universities are increasingly playing a vital role in social and economic development, the universities still encounter challenges of increased staff turnover. Staff turnover has become a critical challenge in many universities including Kenyatta University as they move to foreign countries and other academic institutions that can guarantee their satisfaction (Ibua, 2017). This inversely interferes with the quality of education on offer at the institution as well as the development and expansion of the various schools and departments. This further affects students' population/ numbers and the overall ranking of the institution both locally and globally.

Kenyatta University has been a victim of staff turnover often referred to as brain drain. According to Wosyanju (2014), KU lost twenty academic staff within one year. These challenges have been traced not just in the work environment but also in the teamwork environment. The institution has challenges with staff from different backgrounds working together as a team which requires that they seek first to understand, listen, work openly and relationally, empathize, and commit to results over job status or role consciousness. In KU, most internal (academic and non-academic staff) concerns of dissatisfaction cannot be attributed to an individual employee but to teams of employees, which is ultimately affected by their work environment. The lack of this team spirit/teamwork and motivation has adversely affected performance an issue that this study endeavoured to research.

Ibua (2017) assessed the correlation between team empowerment and the performance of public universities. This study however narrows down to Kenyatta University focusing on teamwork environment and internal customer satisfaction. Mutiso (2017) evaluated the relationship between team empowerment and job satisfaction. The focus was however on the health institutions. Sanyal and Hussein (2018) examined the effect of teamwork and performance at Dhofar University. This study examined performance as a dependent variable as opposed to internal customer satisfaction. The review of previous studies reveals that they mainly focused on the relationships between teamwork environment and performance as opposed to its effect on internal customer satisfaction. The studies were further largely hinged on other contexts. The studies also mostly focused on performance as a whole and as such isolated internal customer satisfaction which is a key aspect of performance. This research seeks to fill these gaps by assessing the influence of teamwork empowerment on internal customer satisfaction at Kenyatta University.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Literature Review

2.1.1. The STAR Team Model

The Star Team Model was introduced by Apex Leadership in 1997. The STAR model represents a leadership theory that illustrates the strategies that leaders should integrate to strengthen the team and its performance. In this case, it provides practical tips that help leaders to focus on their core duties and responsibilities. The model suggests three key strengths which include integration, strength-based, and outside factors (Yuan, 2016). Integration asserts that leaders need to align the key elements that ensure they achieve individual, team, and organizational outcomes. Secondly, the strength-based aspect stresses the emerging issue of strength-based management. Lastly, the outside factors recognize what most leaders mostly miss from the various leadership models; and that leaders must be as proficient in managing the external aspects of the team as they are in managing within the team (Yuan, 2016).

The STAR Team Model suggests five main requirements for a successful team including strengths, teamwork, alignment, results, and other factors. The first element of the key requirements is strengths which relate to strengths-based thinking and realizing that people tend to advance faster in areas that they are already good at. The second element is teamwork which entails combining the effort of each team member to enhance their strengths as they complement each other. The third element is alignment which entails aligning the other three key elements to the goals, objectives, and vision of the organization to that of the team (Yuan, 2016). It ensures that these two players work in unison to achieve a common goal effectively. The fourth element is results which assert that leaders ought to communicate the resulting requirement for each team member (Yuan, 2016). As team members work together to achieve their goals and objectives, they must be aware of their result requirements.

The model asserts that the key capability of the Facilitative Leader is the ability to create and lead diverse teams that either perform a specific project or the existing management teams in the organization. The last element is other factors illustrating that it is essential that leaders align and adapt to the environment in which the team operates (Yuan, 2016). It thus requires the recognition that external influences have a substantial effect on the efficiency of the team therein. For instance, the issues facing other teams in the organization, issues facing the organization itself, and the issues outside the organization can affect the performance of the team therein.

In the case of Kenyatta University, the star model provides practical tips that help leaders to focus on their core duties and responsibilities. The model which suggests three key strengths which include integration, strength-based, and outside factors can help enhance the teamwork environment at Kenyatta University. The strength-based aspect emphasizes the emerging issue of strength-based leadership. This however could be a shortcoming since it focuses more on leaders or leadership taking a stronger role unlike the team moving together to build a stronger environment interdependent. Lastly, the outside factors recognize what most leaders often miss from the various leadership models; leaders must be as proficient in managing the external aspects of the team as they are in managing within the team. The theory supported team empowerment and internal customer satisfaction.

2.2. Empirical Literature Review

2.2.1. Team Empowerment and Internal Customer Satisfaction

Empowerment requires rewarding employees for the great services they provide to the organization. Ugboro and Obeng, (2013) suggested that empowerment necessitates team members to show determination and also take risks as well. For the leaders that recognize and encourage their employees who show extra effort or take risks in the organization, the members improve on that behaviour eventually. Leaders who appreciate their teams have greater empowerment scores. While some team managers often recognize and reward their employees, in other teams they barely have recognition.

Jawad, Tabassum, Abraiz, and Raja (2012) studied the influence of team empowerment on the performance of a team in Pakistan. The independent variables that were identified included; responsibilities, information, independence, and creativity. Questionnaires were employed in data collection where the sample size was 100 people. A regression analysis was done and the findings showed that empowerment influence the team's performance. Specifically, it was established that the independence of a team had a significant and positive correlation with the performance of a team. The significance was higher in comparison to the other independent variables. The correlation between information and performance was significantly inverse. While the study was important to the current research, its main focus was on how team empowerment influences performance. The current research considered teamwork empowerment at Kenyatta University and how internal customer satisfaction was being achieved or realized among staff in the institution. This study didn't examine this but dealt with team empowerment and performance. The study was also undertaken in Kenya which is a different context from Pakistan.

Ibua (2017) examined the correlation between team empowerment and performance in public universities in Kenya. The predictor variables were involved in decision-making, autonomy, and enabling structures. The research used a descriptive research approach with the workers at accredited public universities as the population in 2013. Using proportionate random sampling and multi-stage sampling, a sample size of one thousand and eleven staff was used. Questionnaires were used and analysis was done through the Pearson product-moment correlation and the simple linear regression. Results from the analysis showed a positive relationship between team empowerment and performance in universities. The research concentrated on performance as a dependent variable contrary to the current study which concentrated on internal customer satisfaction as a dependent variable.

Mutiso (2017) established the correlation between team empowerment and job satisfaction at Machakos level five hospital in Kenya. Empowerment was looked at in terms of decision-making, training, and compensation. The target population was the entire hospital personnel, and a descriptive study design was employed. Consequently, the sample size was 130 employees. Questionnaires aided the process of data collection. Regression analysis confirmed a significant correlation between empowerment and job satisfaction. The current study focused on university staff. It had a greater scope and sample size than the study at Machakos level five hospital. They both used a descriptive research design to conclude the connection between team empowerment/ teamwork environment and performance or in this particular study internal customer satisfaction. The research; however, considered the hospital whose institutional setting is different from that of the university and it is for this motive that the current study concentrated on Kenyatta University.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a descriptive research design. Kim, Sefcik, and Bradway (2016) define a descriptive study as research that focuses on understanding the characteristics of a particular population. The descriptive research approach was chosen for the study because it allows for the asking of what, when, how, where, and who questions. In determining the effect of team empowerment on customer satisfaction in service institutions, the descriptive design supported the use of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This study’s target population was all the academic staff and non-teaching staff at KU. The university currently has about 3,033 staff comprising 1,929 non-teaching staff and 1,104 teaching staff. In this study, stratified proportionate sampling was used to select the respondents who participated in the research. The sample size was drawn from a population of 3,033 members of teaching and non-teaching staff. This sample size of 341 was calculated using the Fisher sampling formula, 124 were teaching staff and 217 were non-teaching staff. The primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires.

A pilot study was done in one school to ascertain the validity and reliability of the study questionnaire. The researcher received approval from KU Graduate School to proceed with data collection. Further, the researcher obtained a research permit from National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) and approval from the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research, Innovation, and Outreach (DVC RIO) to conduct research at KU. The data analysis encompassed descriptive statistics and multiple regression techniques. The descriptive analysis utilized standard deviations, means, percentages, and frequency tables to analyse the data. The regression model analysis was also used to establish the influence of teamwork empowerment on internal customer satisfaction as indicated in the following function:

$$CS = \alpha + \beta_1 TE_1 + \varepsilon; \text{ Where: } \beta_1 = \text{Regression coefficients; } CS = \text{Internal Customer Satisfaction; } TE = \text{Team Empowerment; and } \alpha = \text{Constant.}$$

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1. Descriptive Analysis

The researcher endeavoured to determine the effect of team empowerment on internal customer satisfaction at Kenyatta University. It was requested of respondents show their degree of agreement or disagreement based on the statements given in the questionnaire. Table 1 and Table displays the descriptive statistics for team empowerment and Internal customer satisfaction respectively.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for team empowerment

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
Employees are often trained from time to time	2.90	0.30
Employees are rewarded upon performance	2.66	0.34
Employees are recognized for good works	2.54	0.31
Employees have interpersonal skills	3.13	0.30
Team empowerment affects internal customer satisfaction	3.26	0.26
Average score	2.90	0.30

Source: Researcher data (2023)

The results from Table 1 demonstrate that most of the respondents agreed that staff have interpersonal skills and that team empowerment affects internal customer satisfaction as revealed by means of 3.13 and 3.26 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.30 and 0.26 correspondingly. On the other hand, most of the respondents disagreed that employees are often trained from time to time, employees are rewarded upon performance, and that employees are recognized for good works as indicated by means of 2.90, 2.66, and 2.54 respectively with standard deviations of 0.30, 0.34, and 0.31. Based on the findings, the average mean score of 2.90 indicates that there is a lack of team empowerment at Kenyatta University. The variance in the levels of agreement or disagreement was uniformly distributed as revealed by the average standard deviation of 0.30.

The results suggest that factors such as employee training from time to time, rewarding of employees upon performance, recognizing employees for good works, and employee interpersonal skills are significant in achieving internal customer satisfaction in an organization hence enhancing organizational performance. The findings agree with Mutiso (2013) who argued that team empowerment affects job satisfaction among employees. According to Idua (2017), factors such as staff involvement in decision-making, autonomy, and enabling structures strongly influence team empowerment in an organization.

Table2. Descriptive statistics for Internal customer satisfaction

Statement	Cumulative mean	Cumulative standard deviation
The level of staff training that is offered from time to time	2.63	0.325
The rewards to employees for team performance	2.66	0.340
Recognition for good work	2.54	0.309
The level of interpersonal skills among the employees	3.13	0.278
The kind of work attitude in teamwork	3.06	0.291
Team member's willingness to achieve the goals	3.54	0.222
Level of support from other employees	3.38	0.245
The extent to which you interact with your supervisor	3.16	0.278
The level of participation of management in organizational activities	2.83	0.291
The flow of information from top to bottom	2.95	0.288
The level of trust among employees	3.49	0.187
Average scores	3.03	0.280

Source: Researcher data (2023)

The average mean of 3.03 as exhibited in Table 1 shows that respondents moderately agreed with the statements on internal customer satisfaction. Further analysis shows that respondents were satisfied with the level of interpersonal skills amongst the employees, the kind of work attitude in teamwork, team members' willingness to achieve the goals, level of support from other employees, the extent to which you interact with your supervisor, and the level of trust among employees as indicated by means of 3.13, 3.06, 3.54, 3.38, 3.16 and 3.49 respectively. Respondents were dissatisfied with the level of staff training that is offered from time to time, the rewards to employees for team performance, recognition for good work, the level of participation of management in organizational activities, and the flow of information from top to bottom as shown by means of 2.63, 2.66, 2.54, 2.83 and 2.95 respectively.

5.2. Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics were used to characterize the data, make inferences and make conclusions. The study sought to determine the correlation between teamwork empowerment and internal customer satisfaction at Kenyatta University. Regression analysis was used and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table3. Regression Coefficient

	Beta β Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	0.974	0.375	2.597	0.019
Team Empowerment	0.229	0.088	2.589	0.019

a. Dependent variable: Internal customer satisfaction

Source: Researcher data (2023)

The regression equation $CS = \alpha + \beta_1 TE + \epsilon$ becomes;

$$CS = 0.974 + 0.229TE + 0.088$$

$$\text{Internal Customer Satisfaction} = 0.974 + 0.229 \text{ Team Empowerment} + 0.088$$

The results in Table 3 show that team empowerment has a p-value of less than 0.05 and hence was a significant predictor of Internal customer satisfaction. The regression analysis indicates that the beta coefficient of team empowerment was ($\beta_1 = 0.229$) with a p-value of ($p = 0.019$). Based on this, the outcome of a unit increase in team empowerment would result in an increase in internal customer satisfaction by 0.229 units. Team empowerment elements such as training employees from time to time, rewarding employees upon performance, recognizing employees for good work, and employees having interpersonal skills are key in enhancing internal customer satisfaction at Kenyatta University. A p-value of 0.019, which is less than 0.05, revealed that team empowerment was a significant determinant of customer satisfaction. The results agree with a study by Mutiso (2017) which determined that team empowerment has a significant and positive effect on employee satisfaction in a company. Additionally, a study by Sanyal and Hisam (2018) established a strong and positive effect of team empowerment on employee performance in an organization.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study concluded that training employees from time to time, rewarding employees upon performance, and recognizing employees for good work positively and significantly affect internal customer satisfaction at Kenyatta University. The problem is that these elements have not been consistently implemented to meet employee needs so that team empowerment can be improved. Despite team empowerment lacking at Kenyatta University, employees felt that it is a key element in enhancing internal customer satisfaction at the institution and therefore should be given attention by the institution.

The study, therefore, recommended that Kenyatta University should give enough attention to team empowerment with the view to improving it. Specifically, KU should focus on policy change to ensure regular training of employees, reward employees upon performance, and recognize employees for good work. Doing this will enhance internal customer satisfaction at the institution and subsequently lead to enhanced staff performance.

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Bancy, has academic background in Biochemistry, Project Management and Strategic Management, and has an established career in organizational management with over 10 years in administrative roles and project management. She has worked in both public and private sector, and in the informal sector with youth groups, community based organizations with a focus on achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. She is currently an administrator in a public university in Kenya.



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She is also an experienced academician, researcher, and consultant for over 15 years, Dr Wanjira has undertaken research projects in different set ups including informal settlements, organizations and among the community groups including children, youth and women groups. She has worked with colleges, universities, and development CBOs and NGOs including, Akili Dada, Children International Kenya, COVAW, All Africa Conference of Churches (AACCC), Greenbelt Movement, Nairobi Audiology Centre, Kicoshep Kenya, National Organization of Peer Educators, Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium, African Women Development Fund (AWDF), and Skills for Southern Sudan.

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