Analysis of Occupational Burnout and Employee Engagement at Selected University Libraries in Coast Region in Kenya

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Abstract

Burnout is a result of the vulnerability of workers in developing nations to occupational stressors in their specific institutions. Emotional exhaustion is a common side effect of workplace stress that inhibits employees from fully enjoying their work. As a result, the quality of information services has decreased, particularly in libraries at higher education institutions in Kenya's coastal region. This study aimed to determine the relationship between occupational burnout and employee engagement at selected university libraries in the Coast Region in Kenya. The research utilized a survey research design. The researcher collected data from 54 library staff from 4 Universities. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data. Thematic analysis was utilized with qualitative data, whilst regression analysis and descriptive statistics were used with quantitative data. The study findings indicated that occupational burnout had a negative and significant effect on employee engagement. The study concluded that occupational burnout contributes significantly to negative employee engagement. Particular focus should be on emotional exhaustion, detachment, depersonalization, depression, anxiety, and dissociative tendencies. Helping employees deal with these occupational burnout aspects will enhance their engagement at work.

Keywords: *Occupational burnout, employee engagement, university libraries*

1.0 Introduction

Employee engagement is defined as a positive and rewarding work-related state characterized by energy, commitment, and enthusiasm" (Boikanyo & Heyns, 2018). It is also understood as the tendency of employees to engage in work activities which are explained by knowledge, interests, and interests (Budriene & Diskiene, 2020). Employee engagement is one of the most significant determinants of job performance. Engaged employees portray high productivity, exhibit psychological well-being, and concentrate fully on their duties (Villavicencio et al., 2015; Maricuțoiu & Iancu, 2016). Engaged librarians are expected to take initiative and be proactive, self-motivated, and enthusiastic as they undertake their duties (Akinola, 2020; Akinola, 2020; Harwell, 2013; Martin, 2019). This means that in an ideal setup, for library staff to maintain exemplary performance, they should not only be intrinsically motivated but demonstrate passion and emotional attachment at the workplace.

Burnout is defined as a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress (Kumar, 2018; Bianchi, Schonfeld, & Laurent, 2017). Studies have shown that burnout is related to reduced work engagement (Geary & Hickey, 2018), decreased job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2017), and lower productivity (Pijpker, 2020). The construct of burnout has been studied at the individual level, with several studies establishing that signs include insomnia, chronic fatigue, headaches, and poor appetite, among others (Salvagioni et al., 2017). The main components of burnout are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal achievement (Maslach & Leiter., 2016). Emotional exhaustion is the feeling of emotional exhaustion at work. Depersonalization occurs when people start to see their colleagues and customers as objects rather than people. Declining personal performance is a feeling that work is ineffective and unsatisfying.

1.1 Problem Statement

Employee engagement in the university library is not guaranteed (Martin, 2019). It depends on various predisposing factors such as work environment, availability of equipment, leadership support, occupational burnout, and stress among others (Adebayo et al., 2018; Hongo, et al., 2019; Maricuțoiu & Iancu, 2016). According to a recent survey by Gallup, about 23% of employees experience persistent burnout, while another 44% experience it occasionally (Artha & Hidayat, 2018). Martin (2019) also notes that the level of engagement among librarians is average. Poor employee engagement affects job performance. Martin attributes poor library staff engagement to work overload, poor work-life balance, poor organizational culture, and improper work fit.

Occupational burnout has severe negative effects on employee engagement (Maslach & Leiter, 2010). It hurts the psychological state of employees, causing them to doubt their work competence. Employees suffering from occupational burnout are 63% more likely to take sick leaves and are 2.6 times more likely to be seeking new jobs. If they withstand the distress, such employees tend to be less productive, make many mistakes, and are less innovative (Maslach & Leiter, 2010; Artha & Hidayat, 2018). The study by Hongo et al. (2019) illustrated the detrimental impacts of burnout in the setting of libraries in Kenya, including a lack of focus on work, disengagement, and avoidance of librarians owing to variables including technostress, which results in lower participation in the job. Other notable outcomes of burnout highlighted by Hongo and colleagues are psychological and physical fatigue, poor performance, social isolation, and irritability. This study aimed to determine the relationship between occupational burnout and employee engagement at selected university libraries in the Coast Region in Kenya.

1.2 Research Objective

To examine the relationship between occupational burnout and engagement of library staff at selected Universities in the Coast Region

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no statistically significant relationship between occupational burnout and engagement of library staff at selected Universities in the Coast Region.

2.0 Literature Review

In the information economy of today, engagement is a crucial perception since it enhances both personal and professional pleasure. According to research (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017; Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020), motivated employees demonstrate improved levels of productivity, inventiveness, customer service, and innovation. By assuring low employee

turnover and absenteeism, commitment further boosts the organization's competitiveness. Due to their dedication to the company, genuinely driven employees have higher job satisfaction (Halty, Schaufeli & Salanova, 2019). Employee engagement is characterized by a willingness to go above and above and a passion for their work (Amri & Putra, 2020; Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Sulaiman, Sharhrazad, & Zahoni, 2016) is well-known since it has undergone psychometric testing. The rating scale spans from 1 to 7 (strongly disagree = 1; entirely agree = 7), and there are a total of 17 elements on the scale. Seven mastery touches, four commitment touches, five performance touches, five items measuring strength, and one item measuring total motivation are all included.

Agyei et al. (2019) found that burnout was common among librarians in South Africa, Ghana, and Nigeria. Agyei et al. (2019) used MBI to gather information from reference and electronics librarians. This study found that librarians working in e-services and reference books experienced extreme fatigue. Therefore, Agyei et al. (2019) recommended that institutions use both professional and personal avenues to address the problem of burnout among employees. However, the main limitation of Agyei et al. (2019) is that the study only focused on librarians working in one section. Taris et al. (2017) examined the relationships between the two main dimensions of burnout and work engagement using data from a cross-sectional study of 1,535 Dutch police. They also examined the simultaneous and discriminatory validity of these dimensions by connecting these four dimensions with various important job requirements and work resources. The difference between burnout and commitment is difficult to distinguish, according to confirmation factor analysis.

3.0 Materials and Methods

The research utilized a survey research design in the data-gathering process. The study target population was 54 library staff from 4 Universities in the Coast Region in Kenya. The research employed a census method sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data. The validity and reliability of the research instrument were tested using expert review and Cronbach's alpha respectively. Thematic analysis was utilized with qualitative data, while regression analysis and descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used with quantitative data.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Reliability Test

A reliability test was used to evaluate the questionnaire's dependability. Particularly, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were computed, and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability results on main constructs of the study

Constructs	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Burnout (X)	13	0.928
Employee Engagement (Y)	13	0.873

Table 1 indicates that Cronbach's alpha value for each of the variables was higher than 0.7. In particular, occupational burnout was 0.928, and employee engagement was 0.873. Cronbach coefficients of 0.7 or higher are considered satisfactory and indicate instrument dependability (Taber, 2018). Therefore, items in the questionnaire were reliable for further analysis.

4.2 Response Rate

The study respondents included 54 library staff from 4 universities located in the coastal region. Out of this, 4 university Librarians were interviewed while 47 library staff were responded to the questionnaires. The study's response rate was therefore (51) 94.4% which was sufficient for further analysis. Saunders et al. (2009) opine that a response rate greater than 50% is sufficient for statistical analysis.

4.3 Occupational Burnout

The study aimed to investigate the association between professional burnout and employee engagement at particular coastal university libraries. The concept of professional burnout was measured by asking respondents to assess several items. The items related to emotional exhaustion, detachment, depersonalization, depression, anxiety, and dissociative tendencies. Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Agree (4), and strongly agree (5) were the options on the Likert scale used. Descriptive results in the form of frequencies (f) and percentages (%) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Occupational Burnout

Statements on Burnout (N=47)	1 f(%)	2 f(%)	3 f(%)	4 f(%)	5 f(%)	M	SD
I have felt burnout from work in the past year	9(19.1)	5(10.6)	17(36.2)	9(19.1)	7(14.9)	3.0	1.3
Occasionally I'm under stress, thus much energy	7(14.9)	13(27.7)	18(38.3)	7(14.9)	2(4.3)	2.7	1.0
I feel physically and emotionally exhausted while at work	13(27.7)	11(23.4)	12(25.5)	7(14.9)	4(8.5)	2.5	1.3
I lack interest in office work	27(57.4)	8(17)	9(19.1)	2(4.3)	1(2.1)	1.8	1.0
I find myself moody at work	24(51.1)	12(25.5)	8(17)	3(6.4)	0	1.8	1.0
I feel sleepy and tired while undertaking office work	28(59.6)	8(17)	5(10.6)	2(4.3)	4(8.5)	1.9	1.3
My energy levels while at work are not optimum for executing work-related tasks	20(42.6)	13(27.7)	7(14.9)	5(10.6)	2(4.3)	2.1	1.2
Concentration while at work is limited thus cannot engage fully in work activities	25(53.2)	8(17)	10(21.3)	3(6.4)	1(2.1)	1.9	1.1
Sometimes I feel helpless while engaging in work activities	23(48.9)	11(23.4)	7(14.9)	3(6.4)	3(6.4)	2.0	1.2
I think am frustrated at work	25(53.2)	9(19.1)	6(12.8)	2(4.3)	5(10.6)	2.0	1.4
I feel total burnout and at the point where I need to rest	18(38.3)	11(23.4)	9(19.1)	4(8.5)	5(10.6)	2.3	1.4
I feel need medical help to manage my weariness	27(57.4)	10(21.3)	5(10.6)	4(8.5)	1(2.1)	1.8	1.1
Overall mean						2.3	1.2

The findings in Table 2 indicate that the participants disagreed with most of the statements on occupational burnout as supported by an overall mean of 2.3 and a standard deviation of 1.2. Most respondents disagreed with the assertion that they were uninterested in office jobs, were moody at work, felt sleepy and tired while undertaking office work, energy levels while at work

are not optimum to execute work-related tasks, concentration while at work is limited and thus cannot engage fully in work activities, feeling helpless while engaging in work activities, frustrated, feeling total burnout, and feeling the need for medical help to manage weariness. The findings imply that most of the library staff did not consider occupational burnout as a serious challenge to employee engagement. The findings are inconsistent with the results of Woo et al. (2020) who pointed out that there was a high prevalence of occupational burnout among service professionals.

Results on occupational burnout from interview Guide

The study sought to find out whether respondents enjoyed their work and it emerged that majority enjoyed their work. The respondents were asked how they execute work when their energy levels are low due to burnout and whether they seek medical help. A respondent reported, "*I take an off or off, and then embark to work*". The study sought to find what signs the librarians look out for to say that they feel work burnout and whether they do seek medical help. A major theme emerged most frequently "*tiredness and low concentration* were reported as signs of feeling burnout. Another librarian noted "*Lack of self-drive in execution of my duties and mental exhaustion"* as the signs to look for to feel work burnout.

The results are consistent with the work of Geary and Hickey (2018) who concluded that burnout is related to reduced work engagement. Similarly, Kim et al. (2017) noted that burnout is related to decreased job satisfaction.

4.4 Employee Engagement

The dependent variable of this research is the involvement of library staff in selected coastal colleges. The concept of employee engagement was measured by asking respondents to rate several items. The aspects about vigor, commitment, and absorption. Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Agree (4), and strongly agree (5) were the options on the Likert scale used. Descriptive results in form of frequencies (f) and percentages (%) are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Results on Employee Engagement

Statements on Employee Engagement (N=47)	1 f(%)	2 f(%)	3 f(%)	4 f(%)	5 f(%)	M	SD
I am proud to work for my library	3(6.4)	14(29.8)	18(38.3)	18(38.3)	12(25.5)	3.8	1.0
I am happy with an employee reward system	11(23.4)	11(23.4)	16(34)	4(8.5)	5(10.6)	2.6	1.3
I am motivated to work with others	2(4.3)	5(10.6)	14(29.8)	21(44.7)	5(10.6)	3.4	1.0
I am engaged at work and less likely to voluntarily leave the company for another organization	6(12.8)	10(21.3)	20(42.6)	8(17)	3(6.4)	2.8	1.1
I'm always present at work only away on leave or when necessary	2(4.3)	3(6.4)	8(17)	13(27.7)	21(44.7)	4.0	1.1
I feel valued in the role I play in the organization	5(10.6)	5(10.6)	16(34)	11(23.4)	10(21.3)	3.3	1.2
I utilize the skills I have in executing work duties	2(4.3)	3(6.4)	9(19.1)	17(36.2)	16(34)	3.9	1.1

I have a good relationship with my manager and peers	2(4.3)	17(36.2)	0	13(27.7)	15(31.9)	3.8	1.0
My performance at work is met	4(8.5)	9(19.1)	0	23(48.9)	11(23.4)	3.9	0.9
I am happy at my workplace	3(6.4)	3(6.4)	15(31.9)	18(38.3)	8(17)	3.6	1.0
My organization gives room for career growth thus I can grow in my career	12(25.5)	7(14.9)	9(19.1)	11(23.4)	8(17)	2.9	1.5
The nature of tasks at work matches my knowledge and skills	2(4.3)	3(6.4)	8(17)	19(40.4)	15(31.9)	3.9	1.1
Overall mean						3.4	1.1

Table 3 indicates that the respondents had different opinions regarding various statements on employee engagement as supported by an overall mean of 3.4 and their standard deviation was 1.1. In particular, the participants agreed with the statements on pride in working for the library, always being present at work only away on leave or when necessary, utilizing the skills in executing work duties, having good relationships with manager and peers, meeting performance at work, and nature of tasks at work match their knowledge and skills. The results suggest that the majority of the library staff was dedicated to productive participation inside the company.

Most participants were neutral to the statements that they are happy with the employee reward system, motivated to work with others, engaged at work, and less likely to voluntarily leave the company for another organization, feeling valued in the organization, and the organization gives room for career growth. The findings imply that most of the library staff had some concerns in regard to employee engagement at their organizations.

Results on employee engagement from interview Guide

When asked whether the current employee reward system favors them, the respondents provided mixed findings with some acknowledging that the reward system was fair while others observed that the system was not merit-based. When asked about their feelings about engaging and working with fellow librarians, all the respondents noted that they were comfortable and happy working with their colleagues. Further, the respondents were asked whether they were satisfied with the current benefits and compensation policy in their department. According to the respondents, there was a need to review benefits and compensation policies to ensure fairness.

4.5 Effect of occupational burnout on Employee Engagement

The study aimed to determine the connection between professional burnout and the engagement of librarians at selected universities in the coastal region. Linear regression analysis was performed to test the extent to which burnout predicts employee engagement. The findings are presented below.

Table 4: Model Summary; Occupational burnout and staff engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.303a	0.092	0.072	0.6772

a Predictors: (Constant), Burnout

Occupational burnout and employee engagement

Table 4 shows that occupational burnout explains 9.2% of overall changes in employee engagement (R^2=0.092). These findings support correlation results (R=0.303) that occupational burnout has a weak relationship with staff engagement. The ANOVA results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance; occupational burnout and employee engagement

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.085	1	2.085	4.546	.038
	Residual	20.637	45	0.459		
	Total	22.722	46			

a Dependent Construct: Engagement
b Predictors: (Constant), Burnout

An F-statistic of 4.546 and a p-value of 0.038 are shown in Table 5. The proposed model is statistically significant (well fit) in predicting the dependent variable because the p-value is less than 0.05.

Table 6: Coefficients; occupational burnout and employee engagement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.93	0.279		14.081	0.000
	Burnout	-0.247	0.116	-0.303	-2.132	0.038

a Dependent Variable: Engagement

Model

Employee engagement= 3.93 – 0.247 Occupational burnout

Table 6 shows that occupational burnout had a negative and substantial connection with employee engagement (β= -0.247, p =0.038<0.05). The findings imply that occupational burnout contributes negatively to employee engagement. Furthermore, the results show that there is an effect that can be mediated (Hsu et al., 2012). Based on the results, the null hypothesis (Ho_1) that there is no statistically significant relationship between burnout and library staff engagement is rejected.

The study findings are consistent with the work of Geary and Hickey (2018) who concluded that burnout is related to reduced work engagement. Similarly, Kim et al. (2017) noted that burnout is related to decreased job satisfaction. In addition, the findings agree with Agyei et al. (2019) assertion that librarians working in the Electronic and Reference Services experienced extreme burnout.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that occupational burnout had a negative and substantial connection with employee engagement. The implication is that occupational burnout contributes significantly to negative employee engagement. The identified key aspects of occupational burnout include; emotional exhaustion, detachment, depersonalization, depression, anxiety, and dissociative tendencies.

6.0 Recommendations

The study findings established that occupational burnout had a negative and substantial connection with employee engagement. The study recommended the need for university library management to support employees in managing burnout. Particular focus should be on emotional exhaustion, detachment, depersonalization, depression, anxiety, and dissociative tendencies. Helping employees deal with these occupational burnout aspects will enhance their engagement at work.

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