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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP PERFORMANCE AS AN ANTECEDENTS TO ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY DR. M. RAMAKRISHNAN	1
2.	AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF MOBILE MONEY TRANSFER (MMT) ON WATER BILL DEFAULT RATIO: A CASE OF NAKURU WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES COMPANY (NAWASSCO) SAMUEL KIMANI KAMAU, MARY BOSIRE & IRENE RIUNGU	7
3.	IMPACT OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ON CORPORATE REPUTATION V. KUMARAN & DR. R. THENMOZHI	13
4.	ANALYSING THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF VOLATILITY ON THE INDIAN STOCK MARKET DR. K. K. DAVE & SONAL SINGHVI	19
5.	SECTORAL INDICES: ANALYSIS AND IMPACT ON NATIONAL STOCK INDEX DR. JAGDEEP SINGH, HERPREET KAUR & NITU GUPTA	26
6.	WORK LIFE BALANCE (WLB): A CHALLENGE FOR EMPLOYEES IN INDIA DR. POOJA DASGUPTA & KHUSHBU DUBEY	29
7.	ANDROID HUMANOID ROBOT - (HRP-4C) ANURAG GUPTA	33
8.	STUDY OF IFRS AND HARMONIZATION WITH COUNTRY SPECIFIC ACCOUNTING STANDARD DR. SREEMOYEE GUHA ROY	35
9.	CONSUMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS PACKED WATER IN TUTICORIN S. ATHILINGA SENJITH	42
10.	A STUDY ON THE CUSTOMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS E-BANKING INRAIPUR CITY NAZHAT TAHSEEN	45
11.	MORALE AND MOTIVATION DR. ANJALI SRIVASTAV	51
12.	VIRTUAL CURRENCY – EMERGENCE OF BITCOIN K. SHREE JYOTHI, Y. KALYANI & S. SANGEETA	53
13.	DIGITAL MARKETING MIX OF FLIPKART: AN OVERVIEW SHEENA DAS & SENTHIL KUMAR.R	58
14.	BIG DATA USING HADOOP MAP REDUCE TAYYABA HASHMI & PRAMILA SHINDE	60
15.	INVESTORS PREFERENCE TOWARDS VARIOUS INVESTMENT OPTIONS DR. SHUBHRA GUPTA & PRIYANKA MADAAN	64
16.	A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON PEOPLE MANAGEMENT: CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACED BY THE CORPORATE USHA SHREE.V	69
17.	EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT CONTAINER FREIGHT STATIONS (CFS) IN MOMBASA COUNTY TERESIAH WAIRIMU KARANJA & DR. JOSEPH OBWOGI	75
18.	NEED OF MICRO INSURANCE IN INDIAN SCENARIO WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UDUPI DISTRICT MALLIKA A SHETTY	79
19.	REACHING TOWARDS ORGANIC FARMING SHALLU	88
20.	PERFORMANCE OF INDIA'S AND CHINA'S MANUFACTURING GOODS EXPORT TO BANGLADESH: CONSTANT MARKET SHARE ANALYSIS MANJEETA SINGH	93
	REQUEST FOR FEEDRACK & DISCLAIMER	98

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EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT CONTAINER FREIGHT STATIONS (CFS) IN MOMBASA COUNTY

TERESIAH WAIRIMU KARANJA STUDENT JOMO KENYATTA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE & TECHNOLOGY MOMBASA

DR. JOSEPH OBWOGI SR. LECTURER TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF MOMBASA MOMBASA

ABSTRACT

Organizational politics have been a major concern in the contemporary business world. As organizations face each other (competitors) in the ever-competitive market(s), there have been untold levels of inter-organizational political play, and this has spread to intra-organizational politics. The intra-organizational political challenge has been in existence since time immemorial since interests have always been a dividing factor even among people from the same parents. Consequently, organizational politics have been rampant at the international, regional, national, as well as local levels, as has been highlighted in this proposal. Organizational politics have had immeasurable impacts on the workplace environment, but they have worsened with the increase in favouritism from diverse quarters including race, ethnicity, age, class, gender, education, and political affiliations among others.

KEYWORDS

career development, competitive advantage, employee retention, training.

JEL CODE

J23 employment determination, job creation, demand for labor; self-employment.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

rganizational politics is as an activity that permits people in organization to accomplish goals without going through proper channels. Whether political activities assist or harm the organization depends on whether the goals of individuals are consistent with the goals of organization. There has no doubt that political beliefs are an ordinary observable fact in every organization. Organizational politics represented devious behaviour of employees towards their work environment only for their self-interests. These self-interests may be at the cost of other employees or may be organizational goals as well. Organizational politics is the part of the social fabric of any organization. Power, influence and politics have at least some effect on every member of an organization and thus on the entire organizational unit.

Perceptions of Organizational politics are very important aspect of Organizational life with respect to its members as these influence various processes which ultimately affect performance of employees. Since the 1990s, perceptions of organizational politics (POPs) have been extensively studied and have emerged as a good predictor of job outcomes and job performance (Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson, & Anthony, 1999; Valle & Perrewé, 2000; Vigoda-Gadot, 2003; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006). Organizational politics is an elusive type of power relationship in the workplace. It represents a unique domain of interpersonal relations, characterized by the direct or indirect (active or passive) engagement of people in influence tactics and power struggles. These activities are frequently aimed at securing or maximizing personal interests or, alternatively, avoiding negative outcomes within the organization (Ferris et al., 2002). However, they may also be targeted at securing or maximizing collective interests (team, group, organizational, or social) in cases where several decisions are possible that affect different interests. Organizations are social entities that involve a struggle for resources, personal conflicts, and a variety of influence tactics executed by individuals and groups to obtain benefits and goals in different ways (Molm, 1997). Estimating the political climate of a work unit is a complex task but it is crucial for a better understanding of organizations. OP is usually defined as behavior strategically designed to maximize self-interests (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989) and therefore contradicts the collective organizational goals or the interests of other individuals.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

To develop a thorough understanding of the conceptual constructs and empirical research for the present study, extensive review of literature was undertaken. This has not only helped in identification of the gaps in the existing body of knowledge but has also enabled to establish a relationship of the present study with what already exists.

2.1 MOMBASA COUNTY

Mombasa County, is the smallest county in the coast province of Kenya, covering an area of 229.7 Km² excluding 65 Km² of water mass. Administratively, the county is segregated into seven divisions, eighteen locations and thirty sub-location and hosts six constituencies namely Mvita, Changamwe, Jomvu Kuu, Likoni, Kisauni and Nyali. Population distribution and settlement patterns in the county are influenced by proximity to roads, water and electricity facilities. The population is also concentrated in areas where there is availability and accessibility to employment opportunities, affordable housing, and security. The key sectors in Mombasa County include port, fishing, tourism and manufacturing.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF ORGANIZATION POLITICS IN CONTAINER FREIGHT STATIONS IN MOMBASA COUNTY

Container Freight Stations (CFSs) are facilities where freight shipments are consolidated or de-consolidated and staged between transport legs. A CFS is typically located in proximity to an ocean, port, or airport, where cargo containers are transported to and from. The year 2000 saw the establishment of the initial CFSs set within the Kenyan port. The objective was to help in handling decongestion of LCL (less-than-container-load) cargo with the ultimate vision of decongestion Mombasa Port. The rise in the demand for more space because of rising cargo landing at Mombasa port created the need of increasing the port's capacity via integrating the prevailing private sector capacity. Presently, the location of the existing CFSs in Mombasa town fall within a ten kilometers radius of the port, as spelt out in their establishment customs requirement.

Primarily, their license allows them to handle LCL and vehicle cargo, which has proven as a crucial reprieve for Mombasa port in reference to space. Presently, Mombasa town has seventeen licensed CFSs, with seven among these being KPA nominees to handle containers; these are Mombasa Island Cargo Terminal, Consolbase CFS, Makupa Transit Terminal to mention but a few. The others (such as Grain Bulk Handlers Ltd, Portside Freight Terminals Ltd, and Regional Logistics Centres) handle containerized merchandise, vehicles, grain, and other bulk/special loads (Kenya Shippers Council, 2011).

CFSs operating in Mombasa are one imperative area where politics have been hampering the growth to an extent of consulting industrial court actions. With seventeen different CFSs, there have been countless conflicts with the Kenya Ports Authority as the regulating body mainly because of disobedience in abiding to

the due processes and abuse of powers. The main notable hindrance to the control or elimination of such conflicts is the attachment to political interests in the nation, a factor that has been affecting many institutions in the country. This has contributed to the abuse of powers such as contravention or evading the necessary tariffs and irregularly levying charges for the benefit of specific individuals.

3.0 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will help in establishing the effects of organizational politics (OP) on employee performance in Container Freight Terminals (CFS) in Mombasa County and hence provide suggestions on sustainable applicable practices on the topical issue. The CFS's in Kenya play a key role in the business growth of the maritime industry which contributes a substantial amount to the growth of the economy of the country.

4.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study endeavours at relating organizational politics and how it relates to employees performance since 'politics stems from a diversity of interests, and those competing interests must be resolved in some way' (Bauer and Erdogan 2010). The study also tries to highlight how office politics can be used for the mutual benefit of the organization since, without political awareness and skill, we face the inevitable prospect of becoming immersed in bureaucratic infighting, parochial politics and destructive power struggles, which greatly retard organizational initiative, innovation, morale, and performance. In literature, employees revealing dysfunctional outcomes for individuals, groups or organizations have construed organizational politics in negative terms. Thus, organizational politics affect the employees' performance in noticeable ways. This paper aims at unearthing the manner in which organizational politics relates with friendship among employees, employees' job satisfaction, employees commitment to the organization, employees job involvement, and the employees' turnover intentions. Majority of the scholars have focused on the negative aspects of organizational politics, seeing it as representative of the dark side of human conduct, while there have been minimal effort to illustrate the role played by the same organizations in the wellbeing of the organization. In this regards, organizational politics has been considered almost synonymous with manipulation, coercive influence tactics, and other subversive and semi-legal actions. The relationship between organizational politics and organizational relationships and performance versus the outcomes is important because it has both theoretical and practical implications. It can potentially help in creating a better understanding of the meaning of organizational conflict, power, and influence tactics and posit hypotheses regarding their meaning for micro- and macro-level organizational outcomes. Furthermore, it can point to practical tools for handling workpl

5.0 OBJECTIVES

Human beings are political by nature and organizations, as well are full of politics emanating from the diverse interests held by their stakeholders. Organizations need to create an efficient and loyal workforce that is motivated to perform. political behaviour in an organization could be desirable or undesirable and Armstrong (2012) goes further to indicate that organizations consist of individuals who, while they are ostensibly there to achieve a common purpose will, at the same time, be driven by their own needs to achieve their own goals. Loyal, efficient and stable staffs are argued to be one of the key to competitive success (Porter, 1990).

Organizational politics is a global characteristic in organizations and even some of the most successful companies have been hampered by this challenge in notable circumstances. Established and well-known organizations have been affected by this major source of distract in modern business, whose major cause is individuals trying to promote their personal agenda as opposed to the organization's objectives. In particular human resource personnel in the CFSs have to deal with the following factors: (i) gossip (ii) hierarchical persuasion (iii) employee manipulation. (Silbert, 2005). Therefore the research sought to find out the effects of organizational politics in employee performance in CFSs in Mombasa County.

6.0 HYPOTHESES

The container freight stations in Mombasa County are part of the wider transport industry in Kenya. The transport and infrastructure industry in Kenya has experienced massive attention in terms of funding for development in the past five years due to inter-state development projects. This industry forms the backbone of all economic development focus in Kenya. It is therefore crucial to investigate how organizational politics affect employee performance in the CFSs in Mombasa County.

7.0 METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a desktop research technique in seeking facts, general information on the topic, historical background and study results that have been published or exist in public documents. The information was obtained from libraries, newspaper archives and websites, journals and magazines published by various CFSs. A comprehensive review of existing literature i.e., Journals, Books, Magazines, Internet and Newspapers was undertaken to know the contemporary organizational politics scenario in the CFSs and the research undertaken in the field so far. It enabled identification of the prevalent gaps for the study.

8.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

8.1 GENERAL POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

This dimension consists of the behaviour of the employees acting politically. It explains employees' self-serving way to attain valued outcomes. These political activities specifically grow under the few situations.

A. NON-AVAILABILITY OF RULES

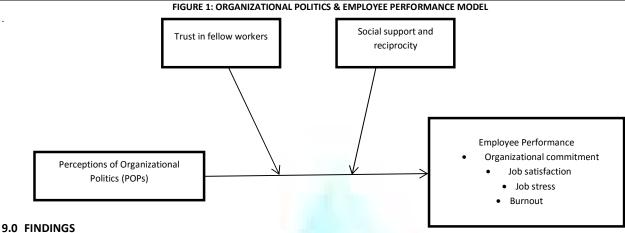
It described when there is no guidance in form of rules and regulations provided to the employees by the organization, they develop their own. Employees develop such policies that provide their own self benefits (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). In other words, policies only provide benefits to the policy makers.

B. DECISION MAKING UNDER UNCERTAINTY

It depicted political influence. When decision is based upon incomplete or vague information and decision maker has to exercise his own analysis and interpretation of the existing data. Vague or incomplete information can be interpreted in different ways resulting in decisions which are not effective, that decisions said to be political.

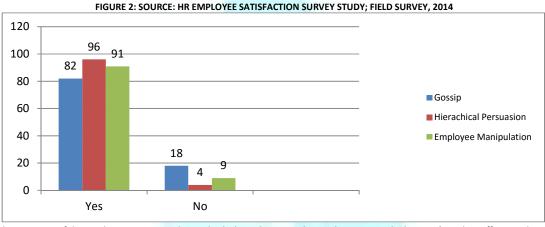
C. SCARCITY OF VALUED RESOURCES

It means employees in organization do hard work for valuable resources. These employees involve in clashes and implement different influence strategy to get profits and achieve their objectives in a variety of ways. The desirability and immediate benefit of the resource will direct to the decision to take part in political activities.



9.1 ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS ASPECTS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

From the desktop studies, it was noted that Hierarchical Persuasion had the highest impact on employees' performance, followed by Employee Manipulation with Gossip ranking the lowest. This is as represented in Figure 2 below:



It was noted that majority of the employees use upward appeal, which involves appealing to the owner or the business's goals in efforts to change the owner's views or behaviours (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007) thus the high ranking of Hierarchical Persuasion. This shows that higher the level of existence of organizational politics will result in lower level of employee's performance and vice versa.

It is an important point to be noted that existing literature has shown that by putting employees to work in the environment prevailing organizational politics in it, the level of the employee's performance tends to decrease. Similarly, majority of the organizations are not considering the existence of organizational politics as a hurdle for improved performance from employees

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Research recommends that the management of the organizations should channelize their human resource towards ensuring that politics in their organizations do not become destructive. Organizations experts like organizational psychologists should be involved to recognize and handle the troubles of their institution. Therefore organizations realize the employees' needs and work for the betterment of the organization environment. It may also propose that the organization should manage development curriculum periodically for their supervisors to better understand the political environment and enable them to take on time remedial actions. Every member of staff should be involved in the setting of the workplace and management should share success with their staff at lower level. It may also recommend that the organization should exercise the workers for enhancing the loyalty of the organization among workers. Research recommends that the organization motivates the human resources to work hard efficiently and effectively for attaining the higher satisfaction. For this organization must gratify the employees on the attainment of a specific task and should assist the human resources to feel excellent. In this way the employees of the organization psychologically and expressively associate with their institution. Organization must arrange orientations for the new employees, which will help them to learn their job tasks. In future the research can be applied in different sectors with others variables. Furthermore mediation effect of different variables in between perception of organizational politics and employee performance can also be explored in future.

11.0 CONCLUSIONS

Power, influence and politics have at least some effect on every member of an organization and thus on the entire organizational unit. Organizational politics is an elusive type of power relations in the workplace. It represents a unique domain of interpersonal relations, characterized by the direct or indirect (active or passive) engagement of people in influence tactics and power struggles. These activities are frequently aimed at securing or maximizing personal interests or, alternatively, avoiding negative outcomes within the organization. However, they may also be targeted at securing or maximizing collective interests (team, group, organizational, or social) in cases where several decisions are possible that affect different interests.

Employee's performance can be enhanced by providing them a working environment free of politics in their organizations. Working environment free of politics will not only help the employees to perform better and take decisions freely but it will also help the organizations to grow by achieving its goals and objectives efficiently and effectively. Implication of working environment free of politics in organizations will result in employees feeling their responsibilities towards their actions and placing themselves on the place of stakeholders to ensure for the benefits of all, the better employee's performance as an outcome by utilizing all

This research concludes that it is significant in providing the views of HR managers in the CFSs on the key aspect of organizational politics effects; this topical issue is globally and locally important yet relatively under-researched with regard to its contribution to employee performance. Recognising the size and strength of the container freight stations in the maritime and transport sector and the demand for employee performance, it can be concluded that employers in this sector need to focus developing distinctive and conducive open organizational environment devoid or with limited politics.

12.0 LIMITATIONS

There was limitation in getting the relevant information required from the various targeted container freight stations. This non-disclosure can be attributed to the suspicion on the part of the respondents as the data required touches on critical human resource issues. A second limitation is that the data used is for CFSs in Mombasa County, which have small or no established HR departments and HR managers without key strategic roles in HR strategic role formulation. Hence, the findings may not give a true representation of the wider organizational politics and employee performance in CFSs in Kenya.

13.0 SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The scope of this study was limited to only the existing CFSs in Mombasa County. The study therefore recommends further research to be done on organizational politics on the CFS and Inland Container Depots in other counties such as Lamu, Nairobi and Eldoret. In addition, the study recommends that further studies also be conducted in other nations having similar CFSs such as Nigeria. This will provide a more detailed comparative analysis of the challenges affecting the container freight sector in the transport industry in the region. Future research might also explore how different categories of employees (e.g. knowledge workers, professionals, labourers) are affected by differing organizational politics set-ups. Additionally, future research could directly seek the views of union representatives for their insights into challenges in managing and leading employees in highly politically charged environments in the organizations.

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