

Efficacy of Green Reward Management Practices on Workers' Performance: Evidence from Public Universities in Western Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Few organizations in Kenya have implemented green-oriented practices, including public universities, which continue to experience internal wastage and suboptimal resource utilization amidst reduced government financial support for their operations. The role of green human resource management practices on academic staff performance in public universities remains relatively unexplored in Kenya. This study assessed the effect of green reward management practices on employee performance. Based on a positivist philosophy, and guided by the Ability, Motivation and Opportunity Theory, an explanatory research design was used to undertake the study on a target population of 438 employees holding top and middle level management positions in 11 public universities in the Western region of Kenya. From it, a sample size of 209 respondents was determined using Slovin's sample determination method. Questionnaires were used to collect data. They were tested for reliability and validity before use. The collected Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics where correlation and multiple regression analysis was done using SPSS version 25.0. The results indicated that green reward management practices had a significant effect on the employee's performance since the R-Square of 0.111 implied that 11.1% change in the employee's performance was attributable to the green reward management practices which were significant on employees' commitment to achieve set performance targets ($t = 5.011, p < 0.001$). The study recommends that Public Universities should invest more resources towards green reward schemes to motivate staff to be sustainably productive.

Keywords: Employee Performance, Green Reward, Management Practices, Public Universities

I. INTRODUCTION

With the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the focus on recognition of climate change and the embrace of green initiatives has preoccupied human resource management functions in organizations globally. Green reward management practices have been adopted in a bid to encourage superior employee performance (Gupta, 2021). According to Mwita (2019) and Abid et al. (2020), this initiative encompasses a systematic process of designing and implementing strategies and policies for giving rewards to employees and teams that are successfully contributing towards the achievement of environmental management initiatives in workplaces. Green HRM rewards and compensation have been identified as a potential tool for supporting environmental activities in organizations (Mandago, 2018). Therefore, organizations are developing innovative reward systems to encourage eco-friendly initiatives by their employees. Reward systems are continuously aligned to the new approach of green initiatives. Jerónimo et al. (2020) posit that in order to be effective, organizational rewards and incentives need to reflect the comprehensive, sustainable approach being pursued by the organization. They need to connect to the firm's corporate culture and conceptually sustain the behavioral change being promoted by the business. The attainment of specific environmental initiatives should be integrated into the compensation system of the firm by offering employees a benefit package that appreciates employees for green performance (Mwita, 2019). This would be a recipe for motivating employees' pursuit of corporate environmental management initiatives.

Green reward management practices have been practiced globally and have been seen to have both financial and non-financial benefits (Rashmi, 2021). Beck-Krala and Klimkiewicz (2017) added that green reward programs can be subdivided into financial and non-financial programs, individual and team-oriented programs, formal and informal programs, programs addressed to managers and employees, and programs targeting internal and external stakeholders. Organizations have rewarded extraordinary environmental performance, practices, and ideas by including environmental criteria in annual salary reviews. Due to the scarcity of financial rewards, recognition rewards for

environmental performance have been established in many organizations. The success of recognition rewards relies on the importance of company-wide identification. Communicating employee environmental excellence is also a beneficial practice in some organizations. There are many ways in which organizations can communicate their environmental excellence within the organization. Instead of providing financial rewards or perhaps an additional day's holiday for excellent work, organizations should think about offering other incentives that advance teamwork or consideration for others within the workplace, as well as those incentives that encourage quantity and quality of work (Mwita & Mwakasangula, 2020; Govindarajulu et al., 2004).

Renwick et al. (2013) and Das and Dash (2024) suggest several green reward management practices. These include green pay/reward system, tailor packages to reward green skills acquisition, use of monetary-based environmental management rewards (bonuses, cash, premiums), use of non-monetary based environmental management rewards (sabbaticals, leave, gifts), use of recognition-based environmental management rewards (awards, dinners, publicity, external roles, daily praise), positive rewards in environmental management (feedback), personal reward plan for all to gain green stewardship/citizenship, linking suggestion scheme with rewards system, linking participation in green initiatives with promotion/career gains (managers advance through supporting staff in environmental management) and use of green tax breaks.

Green reward management practices have been practiced globally (Mishra, 2017; Nisar et al., 2021; Saputro & Nawangsari, 2021). In America, for example, Berrone and Gomez-Mejia (2009) undertook a study of 469 US firms operating in high-polluting industries. They found that firms with eco-friendly performance paid their CEOs more than non-ecofriendly firms. The study also concluded that long-term company results in accordance with pay were associated with greater pollution prevention success. The findings of this study are similar to those of Yusliza et al. (2019), who studied green reward management and how it influenced firm performance among manufacturing and service firms in Malaysia. They found that green rewards were a predictor of firm performance. In Africa, various studies have also been done on the issue. Mtembu (2019) established that knowledge of green human resource management practices, including reward management, had an effect on organizational implementation and project success. Other African studies by Chemjor (2020) and Mandago (2018) done in Kenya further affirm this relationship.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Several studies concluded that firms can achieve positive environmental performance through implementing green human resource management practices, including providing different forms of rewards such as praise letters, promotions, career gains, bonuses, cash, gifts, etc. (Yusliza et al., 2019; Renwick et al., 2013; Rae et al., 2015; Govindarajulu & Daily, 2004). Whereas this may be the case in the manufacturing and service industries where these studies were conducted, the possibility of such eventualities has not been explored in public institutions in Kenya, where the concept of green reward management has not yet taken root strongly. Further, such studies were done outside Kenya, with those done in Kenya by Mandago (2018) focusing on green human resource management practices in state corporations and not public universities. The one done in universities (Lashari et al., 2022) was done outside Kenya. This study, therefore, sought to fill this empirical gap by establishing the effect of green reward management on the performance of public universities in Western Kenya.

1.2 Research Objective

To establish the effect of green reward management practices on the performance of Public universities in western Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Green reward management does not significantly affect the performance of public universities in western Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was guided by the Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO) model. AMO theory was proposed by Deborah J. MacInnis and Bernard J. Jaworski in 1989 within the context of information processing and employee behavior (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989). The ability, motivation, and opportunity (AMO) model is a business model that human resources professionals use to describe the complex relationship between individuals in the workplace and their outcomes (Kellner et al., 2019). It proposed that employee performance is determined by abilities, motivation, and opportunities. It highlights the three separate elements of the elements of the work system that form employee characteristics and affect organizational progress. That is, the employee's ability, desire, and opportunity to make a contribution. Therefore, in the absence of any of the aspects of AMO, the total output of an employee is zero. In order to create well-functioning human resources, it was crucial that the management of public universities look inward and

assess and enhance the composition of their employee profiles for sustainable outputs. The risk of a wrong team composition of employees disenables the requisite synergies between ability, motivation, and opportunity for both employees and the overall sustainable performance of the universities.

Therefore, drawing on the Ability Motivation Opportunity (AMO) framework, green human resource management practices embraced by organizations should emphasize enhancing the abilities of the employees, motivating the employees, and providing the employees with the opportunity to perform. Iro (2021) noted that HRM practices should be aligned to support and increase employees' ability, motivation, and opportunity to perform for an increase in return on investment in HRM programs. Thus, the capacity of green human resource management practices to enhance the performance of employees is premised on their ability to AMO and enhance organizational citizenship behavior. This was because AMO practices have a positive effect on OCB (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021).

Following the ability, motivation, and opportunity (AMO) model, the present research aims to identify which green human resources management (HRM) practices are best suited to developing employee performance through employees' extra-role behaviors. This is further underscored by the fact that the AMO framework provides an understanding of the relationship between HRM and performance (Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016). According to the theory, organizational interests are best served by a system that attends to the employee's ability, motivation, and opportunity (AMO) (Mehmood et al., 2022). Contextual factors, but also individual beliefs, personal affinities, or personal circumstances (among others), might affect the implementation of these practices and the subsequent outcomes. As a matter of fact, some authors consider that AMO influence on performance is more complicated than expected because it depends not only on the existence of a set of practices (HRM content) but also on the employee's subjective perceptions of these practices (Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016). In fact, the selection of practices seems to be based more on intuition about their influence over performance than on substantial empirical evidence (Wood et al., 2015).

Studies on human resource management have been done in various areas (Yusliza et al., 2019; Renwick et al., 2013; Mwita & Mwakasangula, 2020; Ardiza et al., 2020). However, there is a knowledge gap on the extent to which reward management affects employee performance, more so in universities in Kenya. As a hub for research, knowledge, and innovations, universities should take the lead in adopting and implementing innovative green initiatives to promote environmental sustainability.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Philosophy

This study used positivist philosophy, which posits that genuine and factual occurrences could be studied and observed scientifically and empirically and shows imperfect modes of knowledge (Khaldi, 2017). Positivism adheres to the view that only factual knowledge gained through observation (the senses), including measurement, is trustworthy. As a philosophy, positivism adheres to the view that only factual knowledge gained through observation (the senses), including measurement, is trustworthy. In positivism studies, the role of the researcher is limited to data collection and interpretation in an objective way (Dawadi et al., 2021).

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted an explanatory research design which is a quantitative research design to test a hypothesis by collecting data that supports or defies it (Efron & Ravid, 2019). It aided establishing the relationship between the moderating roles of OCB on the effect of Green HRM practices on employee performance in public universities.

3.3 Study Area

The study was carried out at universities located in the western region of Kenya. This region of Kenya was formerly Nyanza and the Western Provinces. This region has an expansive geographical coverage, comprising ten of the 47 counties in Kenya, namely Busia, Vihiga, Kakamega, Bungoma, Migori, Kisumu, Homa Bay, Siaya, Kisii, and Nyamira. The region was viewed as representative in terms of the number and types of universities in it.

3.4 Target Population

This study targeted the top and middle-level management of the academic staff of the 11 public universities in the western region, which comprised the Deputy Vice Chancellors, registrars, deans, and heads of sections. The study focused on the main campuses only, with a target population of 438 such employees. These universities included Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST), Kibabii University (KIBU), the University of Kabanga (KABU), Kisii University (KSU), Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Bomet University College (BOMU), Kotalel Arap Samoei University College (KASU), Maseno University (MU), Rongo University (RU), Alupe University (AU), and Kaimosi Friends University (KAFU). These public universities



are under obligation to pursue the attainment of the sustainability agreements of the Kenya Green University Network (KGUN), which is a joint initiative of the Commission for University Education (CUE), the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (Chemjor, 2020).

3.5 Sampling Technique

The study used the probability sampling technique, which ensured that every member of the sample had an equal probability of being selected for the research. This included stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Stratified random sampling was used to select the top and middle-level managers, namely Deputy VCs, Deans/Directors, HODs/CODs, and Registrars in public universities. Stratified sampling involves dividing the population into subpopulations that may differ in important ways (Denscombe, 2017). It allowed the researcher to draw more precise conclusions by ensuring that every subgroup was properly represented in the sample. Simple random sampling was used to select participants from each stratum. Each member of the stratum has an equal chance of being selected. Data is then collected from as large a percentage as possible of this random subset.

3.6 Sample Size

The study used Slovin's formula to calculate the sample size, which is 209. Therefore, 209 respondents were selected as a sample for this study. For this purpose, a formula by Slovin's was employed in calculating the size of the sample as follows:

The Slovin's Formula is given as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size

e = the margin of error (0.05).

$$n = \frac{438}{1 + 438 (0.0025)}$$

n= 209

A good maximum sample size is usually around 10% of the population (Bullen, 2016). Therefore 209, which is 47.7% of the population was preferable.

3.7 Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative primary data was collected by using a structured questionnaire administered to sampled employees. The questionnaire had close-ended questions and items with a 5-point Likert scale commonly used in the social sciences to measure perceptions, attitudes, values, and behavior (Gkana & Nychas, 2018). The items adopted a 5-point Likert scale with 1: strongly disagree (SD), 2: disagree (D), 3: undecided (U), 4: agree (A), and 5: strongly agree (SA). A structured questionnaire was used to elicit specific information regarding respondents' perceptions of green reward management and employee performance. The collected data was fed into SPSS version 25.0 software for analysis.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Response Rate

The study achieved an impressive response rate, with 204 out of 209 distributed questionnaires being returned. This translates to a response rate of 97.61% as shown in Table 1. Such a high response rate is indicative of the participants' engagement and the effectiveness of the data collection process. It suggests that the findings of the study are likely to be reliable and representative of the target population, thereby enhancing the validity of the research conclusions.

Table 1

Response Rate

Sampled	Responded	Response Rate
209	204	97.61%



4.2 Demographic Characteristics

The study examined the demographic characteristics of the respondents before dwelling on descriptive and inferential analysis of results. Amongst these included the age, gender, academic qualification and age of respondents as presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Demographic Characteristics

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	109	53.4
	Female	95	46.6
Age	30-35	32	15.7
	36-40	23	11.3
	41-45	39	19.1
	46-50	60	29.4
	51-55	35	17.1
	Above 55	15	7.4
Academic Qualification	Masters	94	46.1
	Ph. D	110	53.9
Years Served	1-5	27	13.2
	6-10	58	28.4
	11-15	48	23.5
	16-20	54	26.5
	Above 20 years	17	8.3

Most of the respondents were male although the female gender was also well represented at 46.6% as seen on Table 1. They had a master’s degree and above as their academic qualification and a majority had served in the universities for between 6-20 years (78.4%). As a result, they had adequate experience to give information regarding green reward practices and how it affected performance.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics for Reward Management Practices

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with selected statements regarding green reward management practices among employees. This was done on a 5-point Likert scale where: SA = strongly agree, A = agree, U = undecided, D = disagree, and SD = strongly disagree. The findings were presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Green Reward Management Practices

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
The university has a rewards policy that recognises the employees’ involvement in green initiatives	37	109	50	7	1
	(18.1)	(53.4)	(24.5)	(3.4)	(0.5)
The university has customized some of its compensation package to reflect their environmental goals	28	38	54	84	0
	(13.7)	(18.6)	(26.5)	(41.2)	(0.0)
There is a payment pack package for promoting environment greening activities	52	90	43	16	3
	(25.5)	(44.1)	(21.1)	(7.8)	(1.5)
Employees who champion environmental issues get both monetary and non-monetary rewards	58	92	26	28	0
	(28.4)	(45.1)	(12.7)	(13.7)	(0.0)
The university recognizes employees who are rated as promoters of environmental sustainability	29	64	74	27	10
	(14.2)	(31.4)	(36.3)	(13.2)	(4.9)
There is issuance of special leaves and sabbaticals to staff who are green environmental champions to undertake green activities	6	25	24	94	55
	(2.9)	(12.3)	(11.8)	(46.1)	(27.0)
Gifts and other incentives are periodically given to employees considered as green environmental champions	24	24	27	114	15
	(11.8)	(11.8)	(13.2)	(55.9)	(7.4)
Part of the Employee promotions criteria is linked to their participation in green initiatives, e.g. planting trees, recycling wastes, communication	48	72	47	30	7
	(23.5)	(35.3)	(23.0)	(14.7)	(3.4)



From the above results in Table 3, it can be seen that the universities had policies that linked rewards to employee participation in green initiatives, as was confirmed by 71.5% of the respondents who agreed (109) and strongly agreed (37) with the statement on the issue. However, many respondents (55.9%) disagreed with the statement that they got gifts and other incentives to participate in green initiatives. Further, their promotion criteria were linked to their participation in greening initiatives, as confirmed by 58.8% of the respondents who strongly agreed (23.5%) and agreed (35.3%) with the statement on the issue. In general, these initiatives created a motivated workforce that led to superior environmental consciousness. These findings tally with earlier studies such as Rae et al. (2015), who established that a motivated workforce resulted in enhanced environmental performance. Similarly, Govindarajulu and Daily (2004) equally established that green reward initiatives enhanced employee performance as well as improved environments.

4.4 Employee Performance

Furthermore, there was consensus among respondents that employee performance had improved over the years, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Employee Performance

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
I effectively teach all courses as assigned in a semester	130	64	10	0	0
	63.7%	31.4%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%
I promptly undertake all assigned duties as set out in the university schedule	139	50	13	2	0
	68.1%	24.5%	6.4%	1.0%	0.0%
The pass rate of students in my department has been excellent	129	57	12	6	0
	63.2%	27.9%	5.9%	2.9%	0.0%
The teams I lead in the university have accomplished all assigned duties on time	104	55	30	14	1
	51.0%	27.0%	14.7%	6.9%	0.5%
I have been able to attract one research grant in the last one year	81	50	0	71	2
	39.7%	24.5%	0.0%	34.8%	1.0%
I have published two articles in referred journals in last one year	138	54	8	4	0
	67.6%	26.5%	3.9%	2.0%	0.0%

From the results, it can be deduced that the employees' performance improved in terms of undertaking assigned courses, as was confirmed by 139 (68.1%) of the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement on the issue. The respondents also successfully led teams in accomplishing tasks, as was affirmed by 104 (51%) who strongly agreed with the statement. Further, they were undertaking research initiatives and publishing in refereed journals at least two articles in a year, as was confirmed by 138 (67.6%) of the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement on the issue. These findings concur with earlier findings of the study by Lashari et al. (2022), who posit that for organizational sustainability and success, organizations need to reward environment-friendly employees with tangible and intangible rewards to persuade other employees and other organizations to follow suit.

4.5 Regression Analysis

The study further undertook a linear regression analysis to establish the effect of green reward management practices on employees' performance. The results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5
Relationship between Green Reward Management Practices and Employee Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.333 ^a	.111	.106	4.43362

a. Predictors: (Constant), Green Reward Management Practices

It can be noted in Table 4 that the value for R-squared was 0.111, which indicates that 11.1% of the variability in employee performance was a product of green reward management practices in the model. This shows that 90.8% of the variability in employee performance can be explained by other factors. This was, however, significant, as can be seen in Table 5.

Table 6*Effect Relationship between Green Reward Management Practices and Employee Performance*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.744	1.666		5.249	.000
	GRMP	.380	.076	.333	5.011	.000

a. Predictor: *Green Reward Management Practices* Dependent Variable: *Employee Performance*

Unstandardized coefficients (B): The constant = 8.744 represents the intercept or the expected value of the employee performance assuming Green Reward Management Practices is set to zero. The coefficient of the variable Green Reward Management Practices is 0.380, which suggests that for every unit increase in the variable, the expected change in employee performance is 0.380.

Standardized coefficients (beta): The coefficient of the green reward management practices is 0.333. suggests that for every increase in units of the standard deviation of the variable Green Reward Management Practices, the expected change in the standard deviation of employee performance is 0.333. Based on the significance level $p = 0.05$, the predictor Green Reward Management Practices is statistically significant considering that its p -value = 0.000 is below the typical level of significance. The study hypothesis that green reward management practices do not significantly affect employees' performance in public universities in Western Kenya was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was affirmed.

It was therefore established that green reward management practices had an effect on employee performance in public universities in Western Kenya. These findings tally with those of earlier studies by Ardiza et al. (2021), Das and Dash (2024), and Beck-Krala and Klimkiewicz (2017), who found that green reward management practices affected employee performance. It, however, differs from that of Mandago (2018), who established that green reward management, although yielding desired behaviors that ensured improved employee performance, was not significant in influencing employee performance and environmental sustainability. In general, a majority of such studies tend to show that green reward management practices influence employee performance.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study established that green reward management practices significantly affected employee performance in Kenyan universities. It was also established that other factors not in the purview of the study also influenced employee performance since green reward management practices accounted for only 11.1% of the change in employee performance.

5.2 Recommendations

Public universities in the Western region should adopt and improve on green reward management practices. This involves implementing special recognition and incentives for employees who champion environmental sustainability and employing other measures that can help harness the potential of their workforce, drive positive change, and contribute to a more sustainable future. The universities should align their practices with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and learn from successful case studies to foster long-term business success and contribute to a sustainable future. These will create a culture that encourages employees to adopt environmentally friendly practices and actively contribute to sustainability efforts.

Further, the universities should also investigate and utilize other factors that could encourage superior employee performance since, as seen in the study, other factors accounted for about 90% of employee performance.

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