

Moderating influence of employee engagement on the relationship between union management cooperation activity and employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya

International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Studies
Vol. 11, No. 1, 11-29, 2024
e-ISSN: 2226-4809/p-ISSN: 2304-6945



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ABSTRACT

The study main objective was to establish the influence of Union Management Cooperation Activity on employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya as moderated by employee engagement. The target population was 789 medical doctors and 21 top managers. Stratified sampling technique and simple random sampling to pick 327 doctors while purposive sampling technique was used to pick 21 top managers. The study employed convergent parallel mixed methods design. A self-constructed structured questionnaire was utilized to gather quantitative data from the doctors while interview guide was adopted to collect qualitative data from top management. Quantitative data was statistically analyzed using descriptive (means & standard deviation) and inferential tools (pearson correlation and regression analysis). Qualitative data was thematically analyzed based on objectives and presented in narrative form using text. The study found that union-management cooperation activity had a positive and significant influence on the performance of doctors in public service health sector. Further, results showed that relationships between union-management cooperation activity and employee performance were significantly moderated by employee engagement. The study concluded that union-management cooperation activity was core drivers of employee performance. The study emphasizes the importance of embracing union-management cooperation within organizations. It suggests that both management and trade unions should utilize the study findings to foster cooperation, aligning with the tripartite principle and benefiting all stakeholders involved. The study provides valuable insights for managers explore strategic options for its adoption and implementation as a fundamental aspect of employee management, especially within the healthcare sector.

Keywords: Doctors, Employee engagement, Employee performance, Public service health sector, Union management cooperation activity.

JEL Classification: J51; J58; J59; O15.

DOI: 10.55284/ijebms.v11i1.1116

Citation | Ongiri, N. A., Muya, J., & Matula, P. D. (2024). Moderating influence of employee engagement on the relationship between union management cooperation activity and employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya. *International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Studies*, 11(1), 11–29.

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Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The Ethical Committee of the National Commission For Science, Technology & Innovation, Kenya has granted approval for this study on 13 August 2019 (Ref. No. 1278 133915).

Data Availability Statement: The corresponding author may provide study data upon reasonable request.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

History: Received: 17 April 2024/ Revised: 5 June 2024/ Accepted: 26 June 2024/ Published: 15 July 2024

Publisher: Online Science Publishing

Highlights of this paper

- Union-management cooperation activity had a positive and significant influence on the performance of doctors in public service health sector.
- Relationships between union-management cooperation activity and employee performance were significantly moderated by employee engagement.
- High employee engagement enhances the influence of union-management cooperation activities on employee performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

The significance of trade union activities in enhancing employee performance and ensuring socio-economic justice is paramount in today's competitive global and domestic markets (Tinuoye, 2023). Despite offering competitive pay, organizations still grapple with underperformance among human resources, necessitating a focus on trade unions to predict and improve employee performance (Gold & Smith, 2022). In Kenya, where the doctor-to-population ratio remains below the World Health Organization's recommendation, trade unions like the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists, and Dentists Union (KMPDU) play a crucial role in advocating for doctors' rights and performance improvement. Trade unions, through various activities such as Union-management cooperation, have historically been instrumental in safeguarding employee rights and improving working conditions, particularly in the public service sector (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2018). While trade unionism has faced challenges in Africa, including declining membership and influence, its importance in advocating for employee welfare and performance remains undeniable (Orji, Ringim, Boman, & Emmanuel, 2016). In Kenya, the history of trade unionism dates back to colonial struggles for worker rights and socio-economic fairness, leading to the formation of organizations like the KMPDU (Mwenda, Muturi, & Olunga, 2018). Despite the recognition of doctors' trade unions, challenges persist in Nairobi County's public health sector, affecting doctors' performance. Therefore, understanding and analyzing trade union activities, particularly in Union-management cooperation is crucial for addressing these challenges and enhancing doctor performance in Nairobi County.

Union-management cooperation is a power-sharing relationship that benefits the employer and employee who work together to pursue their mutual interests, often on a give-and-take basis. The traditional understanding of union-management relations has been that of two adversaries, each competing to win at the expense of the other. However, since the 1980s, there has been appreciation that cooperation can make workplace more flexible, friendly and strike-free and universities have established training on how to manage union-management interactions, with emphasis on skills that managers and union leaders can use to foster labour-management cooperation. In America today, thanks to labour-management cooperation, the number of strikes has shrunk since the 1950s (Noe et al., 2018). Moreover, according to Amir and Khan (2020) team synergy augments overall employee performance. Saleemi (2011) and Armstrong and Taylor (2023) state that union-management cooperation complements collective bargaining activity by extending to interests not covered by Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Union-management cooperation activity in this study was grounded on Gandhian theory of trade union.

The concept of employee engagement (EE) has become a concern for most organizations and human resource management professionals. Khan (1990) was the first to coin the concept of employee engagement and defined it as "harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles". He stated that in engagement, "people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". Miawati, Sunaryo, and Yusnita (2020) too contend that in the past decade, EE has become the center of the organization because it has relationship to turnover and productivity and will inspire organizational growth. Engaged employees are loyal, proud, productive, innovative, competitive, inspiring, high performers and stay longer. In concurrence, Patro (2013) state

that EE involve positive emotions where workers are inspired to associate with their firms' bottom-line and concern over posting excellent results. Correlation exist between EE and outcomes like profitability, productivity' turnover, safety and customer satisfaction. Indicators of EE are employee satisfaction, dentification, commitment and royalty. However, [Mwenda et al. \(2018\)](#) say that employee engagement is one of the challenges facing public service medical doctors. Though KMPDU has empowered doctors on health advancement and their welfare, employee engagement is still a challenge, hence it was identified as a possible moderating variable for this study.

1.1. Problem Statement

The performance of medical doctors is vital for ensuring equitable healthcare and overall societal development. In Kenya, various government policies and initiatives, such as Vision 2030 and the Kenya Health Policy 2014-2030, aim to enhance the performance of public service doctors and improve healthcare services ([World Health Organization, 2017](#)). Despite constitutional empowerment and legislative support for trade union activities, challenges persist in Nairobi County's public service health sector, evidenced by incidents like the handover of health functions to the national government due to poor service delivery and tragic events like infant deaths at Pumwani Maternity Hospital ([Mwenda et al., 2018](#)). Multiple doctors' strikes over the years have further exacerbated performance issues, impacting patient care and hospital operations ([Anadolu, 2020](#)). Although past studies have addressed trade union activities, methodological gaps and limited conclusive results underscore the need for further research ([Maina, 2018](#)). Thus, this study sought to investigate whether employee engagement moderates the relationship between trade union activities and doctor performance in Nairobi County's public service health sector, aiming to provide insights into effective strategies for enhancing healthcare service delivery. Thus, the study tested the following hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no significant statistical influence of union-management cooperation activity on employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya.

H₀₂: There is no significant statistical moderating influence of employee engagement on the relationship between union-management cooperation activity and employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The theory of Industrial Jurisprudence, introduced by [Slichter \(1950\)](#) posits that trade unions serve as a crucial mechanism for safeguarding workers' interests in the workplace, particularly in situations where individual bargaining power is limited ([Khanka, 2018](#)). Slichter's theory emphasizes the establishment of work rules and traditions by workers through their unions, termed "a system of industrial jurisprudence," to address labor relations issues and ensure legal security for workers ([Gyesie, 2017](#)). However, criticisms of this theory highlight its potential inadequacy in modern democratic societies where individual contractual systems prevail, leading to challenges such as reduced numerical strength due to anti-union laws and lack of unity. Nevertheless, the theory remains relevant to union-management cooperation activity, offering legal protection to trade unionism and shaping industrial relations law to provide justice to workers ([Sandeep, 2022](#)). In Kenya, the theory has informed legal frameworks, such as the Labour Relations Act 2007, offering legal protection to both unions and employees ([Naeku & Wanyonyi, 2021](#)). However, scholars argue that a combination of trade union theories is necessary to comprehensively understand the complexity of trade union activities, given the diverse socio-economic and political contexts ([Cole & Kelly, 2015](#)). Therefore, the integration of the theory of Industrial Jurisprudence with other theories in this study aims to provide

a comprehensive theoretical framework for analyzing the influence of union-management cooperation activity on employee performance in Nairobi County's public service health sector.

2.1. Empirical Literature Review

2.1.1. Union-Management Cooperation Activity and Employee Performance

Most contemporary organizations are weary of the conflict laden industrial relationships and have instead embraced team synergy with trade unions. Because the age-old low performance, caused by absenteeism or indiscipline, cannot be tolerated in today's competitive market, organizations are adopting novel cooperation dimensions for improved performance (Prasad, 2019). As cited by Armstrong and Taylor (2023) trade unions and management are assuming positive cooperations, mutual interdependence, and the acknowledgement that cooperation on a give-and-take basis will achieve more for them. This is done with the understanding that none would benefit from a hostile environment. In case of differences, the parties agree to resolve them in good faith. Moreover, in the words of Nyaencha (2022) active unions want to cooperate or almost partner with management, hence the importance of the variable to employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Owing to the paradigm shift in the domestic and global market, trade unions and management have become identical allies in the production chain. Cole and Kelly (2015) appreciate the importance of cooperation by stating that in Britain over the last thirty years, there has been a big shift from a combative stance to a more unified approach in employee relations, from adversarial to mutual. Torrington, Hall, Taylor, and Athkinson (2014) further concur by asserting that in Australia today, consultative committees mutually determine terms of employment while Noe et al. (2018) additionally inform that in America, union-management cooperation focuses on the manner employees are handled; with reverence and fairness, minding that it is in their interest to attract talent and minimize turnover. Hence, in current's borderless economy, union-management cooperation is one of the core employee performance enhancers. Therefore, trade unions, management and employees should view shop stewards as key employee performance backers.

Akkas, Chakma, and Hossain (2015) did a survey on Employee-Management cooperation: The Key to Employee Productivity. The findings were that the existing conditions did not encourage cooperation because of mutual mistrust between management and labour, labour disputes, the politicization of trade unions, wrong CB agents, and breach of labour laws. Gurunathan and Seng (2016) researched on factors promoting enterprise-level union-management partnership in Cambodia's garment industry. Based on the reviewed literature, the study aimed to establish methods of avoiding union and management adversarial relations, especially with the new union's law. The findings were that there was adverse relationship between union and management. Whilst the study, like Akkas et al. (2015) found the relationship to be adversarial, it depended on the authenticity of the secondary data, which may not have answered the prevailing research problem. The study variables were also different from those in the present study.

Fortin-Bergeron, Doucet, and Hennebert (2018) conducted a study in Canada focusing on the impact of management and trade union leadership on dual commitment, with a particular emphasis on the mediating role of workplace relations climate. They discovered that the workplace relations climate serves as a crucial intermediary in explaining the influence of direct supervisors' leadership in a unionized environment. Additionally, they found that union representatives' transformational leadership positively affects both union and institutional commitment.

Wagar (2013) carried out research on labor-management relations in Canada through a survey of union officials. The results revealed that over 60% of respondents indicated their union's involvement in employee-management

cooperation. It was noted that union leaders were generally more supportive of cooperation efforts, while top management and supervisors were less likely to endorse such initiatives.

In another study, [Wagaki \(2013\)](#) examined the effectiveness of trade union strategies in enhancing teacher professional performance in public secondary schools in Kiini West District, Kenya. The research evaluated the impact of benefits, motivational programs, and advocacy on performance. The findings indicated that trade unions played a significant role in securing benefits and advocating for reforms, although motivational programs were largely absent. Allowances and promotions were provided, but despite the motivational boost from increased pay, student performance did not show corresponding improvement, suggesting that other factors also influence performance.

2.1.2. Moderating Effect of Employee Engagement

Engaged employees perform better, experience less burnout, and stay longer in organizations. A study done after Covid-19 estimated that 55% employees in August, 2021 intended to seek for new jobs and organizations need to, more than ever, focus on employee engagement ([Stein, Hobson, Jachimowicz, & Whillans, 2021](#)). Further, [Miawati et al. \(2020\)](#) observe that employee engagement is now recognized as a significant topic because it relates with turnover rate, productivity and company growth. Engaged employees will inspire organizational growth. Engaged employees are loyal, proud, productive, innovative, competitive, inspiring' high performers and stay longer. [Kumar and Pansari \(2014\)](#) concur by observing that the most important feature of the employee engagement framework is employee performance. Employee engagement concept has emerged as a real investment which considers employees not just as cogs in the production chain but important partners in manipulating direct relationships in role performance. [Cooper and Schindler \(2014\)](#) provide that when factors cannot achieve performance on simple individual-to-individual relations, the relationship requires support from other variables. [Swaen \(2018\)](#) additionally augment that a moderator variable comes in handy in altering a relationship and changes the outcome that an IV has on a DV based on the moderator's worth.

[Amir and Khan \(2020\)](#) examined how employee engagement influences the connection between personality traits and team performance. Their research found that employee engagement significantly moderated the relationship between extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism with team performance. However, the moderating effect was less pronounced for the trait of openness to experience.

[Deepa and Mohamed \(2017\)](#) investigated the relationship between employee engagement, organizational conflict, and total quality management at Engineering Enterprise Pvt. Ltd. in Trichy, India. The study aimed to gauge employees' perceptions of these factors within the organization. Results indicated that communication had a direct impact on employee engagement, which in turn influenced organizational conflict management and total quality management. The study recommended focusing on six key areas: training, teamwork, confidence, communication, leadership, and recognition.

[Miawati et al. \(2020\)](#) conducted a qualitative exploratory study on employee engagement in a multinational company in Jakarta. Through interviews with key company leaders and focus group discussions with employee groups, they assessed the state of employee engagement. Triangulation techniques by human resource experts ensured data validity. The findings revealed that the company had not effectively implemented employee engagement across all indicators, and there was a notable disparity between the company's engagement initiatives and employees' perceptions. The study concluded that improvements were needed to enhance engagement implementation for better company growth.

[Mishra and Kodwani \(2019\)](#) explored the moderating role of employee engagement on the relationship between conflict and organizational politics in India. The research aimed to evaluate how employee engagement influenced

the perception of organizational politics and relationship conflicts. They found that employee engagement played a significant moderating role in these dynamics.

2.2. Summary of Research Gaps

The study aims to address the research gap concerning the combined impact of union-management cooperation activity and employee engagement on employee performance, specifically within the public service health sector of Nairobi County, Kenya. Past research has overlooked this specific combination of variables outlined in the study's conceptual framework, leading to inconclusive findings. Moreover, previous studies often focused on sectors other than healthcare, making their findings less applicable to the unique challenges faced by doctors in the public health service sector. To address these gaps, the study employs a mixed methods research approach, which is underrepresented in African literature, to provide comprehensive insights into the research topic. Additionally, the study examines the moderation effect of employee engagement on the relationship between union-management cooperation activity and employee performance, a facet that has been overlooked in previous research. Overall, the study seeks to contribute to the understanding of union-management cooperation activity, employee engagement, and employee performance in the context of Nairobi County's public health sector.

2.3. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework, presenting a diagrammatic representation of the independent variable (union-management cooperation), which encompasses collaboration in decision-making, involvement of shop stewards, and consultation and advocacy committees. The moderating variable is employee engagement, represented by job satisfaction, identification with work, commitment, and loyalty. These variables are proposed to influence the dependent variable (employee performance), which is indicated by low absenteeism, goal performance, high-quality healthcare, customer satisfaction, low turnover, reduced accidents, reduced theft, level of productivity, rate of innovation, and effective communication.

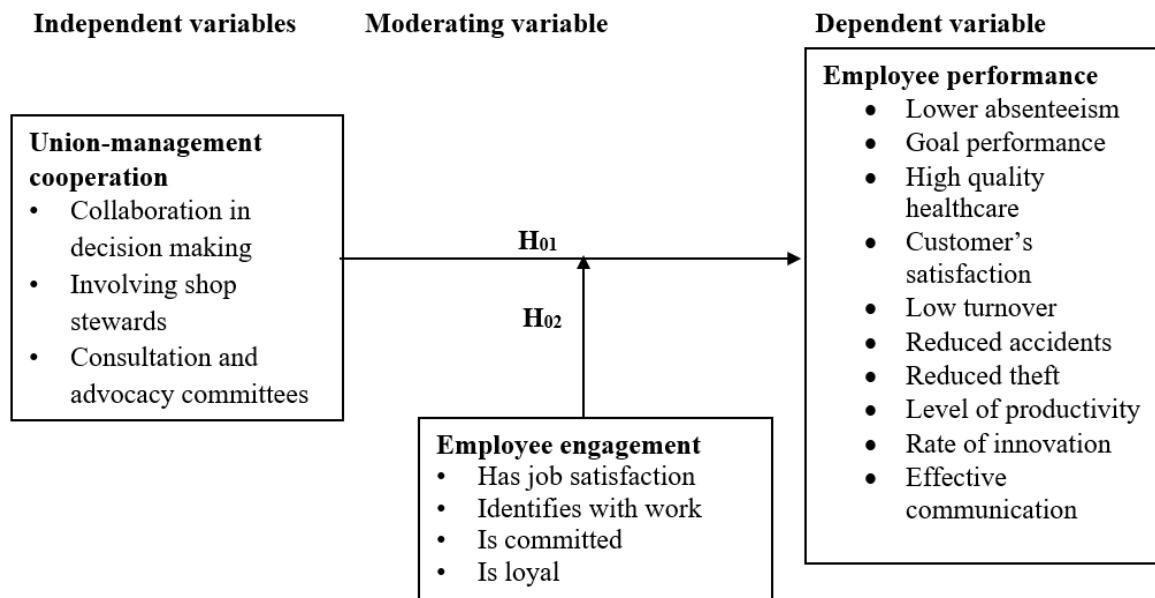


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To fulfill the research problem and purpose, a pragmatic researcher adopts one reality view and uses quantitative approach to test a theory about reality, develop variables to be measured, and hypothesis to be tested and likewise

examines the social actor's perceptions about reality by using qualitative approach so as to provide deeper understanding of the context, leading to a new theory or major changes in the current one. This study therefore used convergent parallel mixed methods design. Convergent parallel mixed methods design was preferred for this study because it is a flexible design that offered a chance to concurrently consider exploratory and descriptive research purpose for in-depth understanding and generalization respectively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.1. Sampling

Stratified sampling was used to classify the heterogeneous medical doctors and top management into six non-overlapping homogenous sub-groups or strata of: 589 medical officers, 142 pharmacists and 58 dental officers while top management was classified into 5 human resource management (HRM), 8 finance and 8 health administrations. Using the proportionate method, the calculated sample of 327 was proportionately apportioned to each stratum. Simple random sampling technique was used to pick the final sample from each stratum as per the apportionment, and the total sample of 327 medical doctors was selected. Further, purposive sampling from the non-probability sampling technique was used to purposively pick twenty-one (21) top management officials who were heads of departments: 5 human resources, 8 finance, and 8 health administration.

3.2. Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

This study used a structured closed-ended questionnaire on the surveyed 327 medical doctors and unstructured open-ended interview guide on 21 top management staff. The self-constructed and self-administered closed-ended questionnaire was on a five-Point Likert Scale: strongly disagree (SD) 1, disagree (D) 2, undecided (U) 3, agree (A) 4 and strongly agree (SA) 5, and used closed-ended questions to collect quantitative data from medical doctors. In this study, face validity was applied in the early phases of designing the questionnaire and interview guide. Face validity was attained when supervisors critiqued the questionnaire and interview guide, experts examined the items, gave their opinions and necessary adjustments made to the items to fit their purpose. To test for criterion validity, this study borrowed items of trade union activities, employee engagement and employee performance from previous studies and theories. These items were selected to align with the specific constructs being measured in the current study. This study questionnaire was evaluated for content validity using the Content Validity Index (CVI). Two supervisors and four experts from the Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH) research and ethics committee were purposefully selected based on a high level of expertise in the field and with self-management support result showed that the average CVI for the items measured in the questionnaire was 0.923. According to Polit and Beck (2011) a content validity index with at least six experts should give a minimum CVI of 0.8. In construct validity, convergent and discriminant are two sides of the same coin and are always done together. The adequacy of sampling for union-management cooperation was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, with values exceeding 0.5 as recommended by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010) indicating a satisfactory sample size for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test also yielded significant results ($p\text{-value} = .000 < .05$), indicating a correlation among the items and suitability for structure detection. Furthermore, the components accounted for over 40% of the variance in management cooperation activity. The component matrix for all seven constructs in union-management cooperation indicated high factor loadings above the 0.5 threshold, as recommended by Hair, Gabriel, and Patel (2014) with no weak or negative factors removed. Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted to identify underlying factors of employee engagement, with all item factor loadings exceeding 0.50, except for two items which were dropped. The high factor loading scores suggested that the items effectively explained employee engagement and were retained for further analysis.

Further, the study generated Cronbach's Alpha tables and principal component analysis to enhance the reliability of the instruments. The study considered a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above as recommended by [Hair et al. \(2010\)](#) that composite reliability values larger than .70 are sufficient for data collection to proceed. Questionnaire items that did not attain the threshold were dropped or edited ([Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010](#)). The findings indicated that union-management cooperation had a coefficient of 0.920, employee performance had a coefficient of 0.930 and employee engagement had a coefficient of 0.965. All the constructs depicted that the value of Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 0.7; thus, the study constructs were reliable. [Hair et al. \(2010\)](#) recommends that composite reliability values be larger than .70.

3.3. Data Analysis

This study quantitative data was statistically analyzed using descriptive and inferential tools with the assistance of SPSS Version 26. Before descriptive analysis, factor analysis was done to check the constructs or items that would provide better measurement, thus stronger relationship. Inferential statistics was done to draw conclusions and a generalization concerning the population, The simple linear regression model is as shown below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

Where:

Y = Dependent variable employee performance, X_1 = Union-Management Cooperation, β_0 = Constant or Intercept, β_i = Are regression coefficients for β_i ($i = 1$), ϵ = error term.

A moderated multiple regression (MMR) model was also applied to determine the estimated interaction effect or to evaluate the moderating effect of employee engagement in the relationship between union-management cooperation and the dependent variable: employee performance. The moderation effect was represented by the interaction effect between the x and z variable. In the multiple regression equation, the moderator variable is represented as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_{1\alpha} X_1 Z + \epsilon \quad (2)$$

3.4. Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data was collected using an interview guide and analyzed thematically according to the study objectives. Responses were transcribed into text and presented in narrative form. Those with similar themes or patterns were grouped into coherent categories. The data was then thematically coded, with similar themes categorized and organized together. The findings were summarized and presented using direct quotations of relevant verbatim responses and selected comments.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The response rate analysis conducted for the study revealed promising levels of participation from both medical doctors and top management officials. Out of the distributed questionnaires, an impressive 92.7% response rate was achieved from medical doctors, with a final usable response rate of 90.5% after data cleaning. [Mugenda and Mugenda \(2013\)](#) suggest that response rates above 70% are considered very good, and [Cooper and Schindler \(2014\)](#) state that studies can continue with response rates above 60%, further affirming the adequacy of the response rates obtained.

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

The study aimed to assess the gender distribution, years of experience, years worked in current stations, and age dynamics of respondents within the Nairobi public service health sector. Findings in [Table 1](#), showed that gender

data indicated a balanced representation, with 51% male and 49% female respondents, meeting constitutional requirements and ensuring varied perspectives. Regarding years of experience, a significant portion had worked in public service for 0-5 years (34.5%), aligning with findings showing a higher proportion of less experienced doctors in public service. Years worked in current stations revealed a majority (67.6%) working for 0-5 years, reflecting adherence to policies discouraging prolonged station tenure to mitigate complacency and enhance diversity. The age distribution showcased a dynamic multi-generational workforce, with 45.6% aged 31-40, indicating varied skills and expertise. Although middle-aged respondents predominated, diverse age representation ensured comprehensive responses, echoing findings showing active participation in professional training across age groups without significant age gaps. These results align with the notion that diverse age distributions yield more varied and insightful responses, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research subject.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics.

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	151	51
	Female	145	49
	Total	296	100
Years worked in the public service	0-5 years	102	34.5
	6-10 years	81	27.4
	11-15 years	53	17.9
	16-20 years	36	12.2
	Over 21 years	24	8.1
	Total	296	100
Years worked in current station	0-5 years	200	67.6
	6-10 years	74	25
	11-15 years	17	5.7
	16-20 years	3	1
	Over 21 years	2	0.7
	Total	296	100
Age of respondent	30 years and below	65	22
	31-40 years	135	45.6
	41-50 years	80	27
	51-60 years	16	5.4
	Total	296	100

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1. Descriptive Statistics for Union-Management Co-Operation

The findings from **Table 2** reveal a prevailing uncertainty among respondents regarding the collaborative dynamics between the doctors' union and management within the healthcare sector. Interviews conducted alongside the quantitative data underscored this sentiment, indicating a general perception of lacking collaboration between the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists, and Dentists Union (KMPDU) and management. Moreover, respondents demonstrated uncertainty about the advocacy for worker-friendly policies and the frequency of consultation meetings between the union and management. This uncertainty extended to the effectiveness of union-management cooperation in areas such as collective bargaining and joint training in labor relations. Additionally, respondents were unsure about the efficacy of shop stewards in representing their interests and the influence of union-management cooperation on doctors' engagement in employee involvement programs. Overall, these findings suggest a notable lack of clarity or consensus regarding the extent and effectiveness of union-management cooperation within the healthcare sector, highlighting potential areas for improvement and further investigation. Interviewee 1 expressed, "Collaborative. Although we have challenges, we talk more now which is why there has been no agitation since 2017" Respondent 11 said, "I'm not sure of that, though it is a good idea" as 15 stated, "it is not easy to know". For example, Interviewee Number 5 commented "No. But there are ad-hoc meetings as the need arises" as numbers 6, 8, 11 and 12 said "No".

Number 14 too said “No, unless there is a grievance”. Respondents complimented by number 2 informing, “No. Even if they are there, I have not seen them,” whilst 7 said “yes. There is one here.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for union-management co-operation.

Constructs (n=296)	Mean	Std. dev.
Trade union has a collaborative relationship with employers' management	2.70	1.02
Management and union lobbies for formulation of worker friendly policies	2.45	0.92
Union and the employer hold regular negotiation, advocacy, and consultation meetings	2.84	0.99
Union and employer cooperation compliments collective bargaining	2.70	1.03
Union and management trains together in labour relations	3.12	1.01
Trade union and management ensures shop stewards effectively represent members	2.72	0.90
Doctors are involved in employee participation and involvement programs	2.95	1.00
Average	2.78	0.74

4.2.2. Descriptive Statistics for Employee Performance

According to Table 3, respondents expressed uncertainty regarding various aspects of employee performance within the public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya. They were undecided about the adequacy of employee productivity and the turnover rate, with mean values of 2.70 and 2.53, respectively. Interviews revealed concerns about poor working conditions, low productivity, and limited creativity and innovation among doctors. Respondents were uncertain about the level of absenteeism and expressed indifference towards service delivery quality. They disagreed with the notions of minimal accidents resulting from negligence and no theft by medical doctors. Moreover, respondents were undecided about high customer satisfaction and disagreed about the satisfactory quality of work, good teamwork among doctors, and their creativity and innovation. Similarly, management interviewees echoed these sentiments. Respondents were indifferent about meeting set targets, the presence of corruption cases among doctors, and the effectiveness of workplace communication and internal business processes. Overall, the findings suggest a lack of clarity or consensus regarding various dimensions of employee performance, highlighting potential areas for improvement within the public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya. Also, management concurs with results that doctors’ turnover rate is low with respondent 4 stating, “It is very low. Instead, they want to come here. It can be witnessed by the big number of applicants we receive when we advertise. Similar results were found from management that accidents on patients arising from negligence were not minimal. Respondent 1 averred “not minimal. I’m sure you heard about the wrong operation on the wrong patient.” For example, respondent 1 stated “Not very good. There is rivalry between and within the cadres,” number 5 “Only when covering for those not present” and 16 “. No. They don’t come to work as required to teamwork.” However, respondent 12 stated, “it is alright” as 15 stated, “not sure”.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for employee performance.

Constructs (n=296)	Mean	Std. dev.
My organization has adequate employee productivity	2.70	1.07
Turnover rate is low	2.53	0.97
There is minimal level of absenteeism	2.59	1.00
Service delivery is recommendable	2.53	0.96
Accidents resulting from negligence are minimal	2.21	0.75
There is no theft by medical doctors	2.40	0.99
Level of customer satisfaction is high	2.67	1.02
Quality of work is satisfactory	2.41	0.92
There exists good teamwork among doctors	2.30	0.92
Doctors are creative and innovative	2.13	0.82
Targets sets are met	2.62	0.97
There are no cases of corruption among doctors	2.83	2.09
Workplace communication is effective	2.70	1.20
Internal business processes are efficient and effective	2.86	1.22
Average	2.53	0.69

4.2.3. Descriptive Statistics for Employee Engagement

In Table 4 respondents' perceptions regarding various aspects of employee engagement within the public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya were explored. The results indicated that respondents generally remained indifferent towards factors such as having a good supervisor, competitive remuneration, and good working conditions. They disagreed on the availability of training and career development opportunities, maintaining good co-worker relationships, and the reasonableness of workload. Additionally, respondents were undecided about the presence of common goals and strategies, a strong organizational culture, and the provision of individual mentorship. They also disagreed on effective communication, charismatic leadership, job security, friendly policies, structures, and procedures, as well as employee participation and involvement. Furthermore, respondents were undecided about employee recognition and well-wishing, while disagreeing on working in teams and trusting team leaders. Overall, the findings suggest a lack of consensus on various aspects of employee engagement within the public service health sector, with an average mean of 2.39 and a standard deviation of 0.83. In agreement, interviewee 2 said, "Some identify but most of them want to be in Afya house and not in the facilities" whilst 3 said, "No. They are not happy with the employer leadership".

On being asked about employee commitment, interviewee 6 said, "They are rarely involved in making decisions that affect them in conformity, interviewee number 3 stated, "loyalty is higher among those in management. Those in hospitals are not as loyal as those in management. To me, they do not want the core business because management does not recognize their work."

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for employee engagement.

Constructs (n=296)	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. dev.
Employee satisfaction				
My supervisor is good	1	5	2.31	1.11
Our remuneration is competitive	1	5	2.36	1.13
Working conditions are good	1	5	2.54	1.25
There are training and career development opportunities	1	5	2.31	1.08
We have good co-worker relationships	1	5	2.16	0.85
Workload is reasonable	1	5	2.95	1.29
Employee identification				
We have common goals and strategies	1	5	2.21	0.90
There is strong organization culture	1	5	2.43	1.11
Individual mentorship is available	1	5	2.47	1.13
There is effective communication	1	5	2.43	1.14
There exists charismatic leadership	1	5	2.30	1.13
Employee commitment				
Doctors have flexible work schedules	1	5	2.72	1.24
There is job security	1	5	2.29	1.12
Friendly policies, structures and procedures exist	1	5	2.37	1.15
Employee participation and involvement is satisfactory	1	5	2.30	1.10
Employee loyalty				
There is employee recognition and well wishing	1	5	2.55	1.20
Working in teams is practiced	1	5	2.16	0.97
Trusting in team leaders is there	1	5	2.26	1.01
Average	1	5	2.39	0.83

4.3. Assumptions of Regression Model Testing

The study employed a series of statistical tests to ensure the validity of the regression model used to analyze the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The Test of Normality revealed that the data followed a normal distribution, supported by both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests with p-values above 0.05. Linearity tests confirmed the linear relationship between variables, while the (Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test

showed statistically significant linear relationships. Autocorrelation of residuals was absent, as indicated by Durbin-Watson statistics falling within the expected range of 1 to 2. Multicollinearity was ruled out by variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values, which were within acceptable ranges. Additionally, homoscedasticity of variance was supported by the Levene test. These collective findings validate the regression model's reliability and ensure the accuracy of the study's conclusions regarding the associations between variables.

4.4. Correlation Analysis

The findings presented in Table 5 revealed robust correlations between Employee Performance (EP) and both Union-Management Co-operation Activity (UMCA) and Employee Engagement (EE). Specifically, the correlation coefficient between EP and UMCA was determined to be $r = 0.545$, indicating a strong positive relationship ($p = 0.000$). Similarly, the correlation coefficient between EP and EE was calculated at $r = 0.409$, denoting a significant positive association ($p = 0.000$). These results underscore the influential role of union activities and employee engagement in driving and forecasting Employee Performance. In essence, as the levels of UMCA and EE increase, Employee Performance is similarly expected to rise, emphasizing the pivotal impact of these factors on organizational outcomes.

Table 5. Correlation between the dependent and independent variables.

		EP	UMCA	EE
EP	Pearson correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	???		
UMCA	Pearson correlation	0.545**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
EE	Pearson correlation	0.409**	0.091	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.117	

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 EP=Employee performance, CBA=Collective bargaining activity, UOA=Union organizing activity, EP = Employee performance (), UMCA= Union-management co-operation activity.

4.5. Regression Analyses (Hypotheses Testing)

Linear regression analysis was used to establish the influence of union organizing activity on employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya. The regression analysis test was used, including a model summary, which included a model summary, ANOVA for the goodness of fit and Coefficient of Estimates as presented in Tables 6a, 7 and 8.

Table 6a. Regression model summary for union-management co-operation and employee performance.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.545	0.297	0.294	0.584

Table 6a presents the regression model summary for union-management co-operation and its influence on employee performance among doctors in public service health sector. The R-squared value of 0.297 (adjusted R-squared: 0.294) indicates that approximately 29.7% (29.4%) of the variation in employee performance can be accounted for by union-management co-operation activity. In other words, the model, which includes union-management co-operation as a predictor, explains 29.7% of the variability observed in employee performance. The adjusted R-squared value provides a slightly more conservative estimate, considering the number of predictors in the model and adjusting the r-squared value accordingly.

A linear regression F-test was carried out using ANOVA to determine the goodness of fit for a regression model on the influence of union-management cooperation on employee performance, and the findings were summarized in Table 7.

Table 6b. ANOVA for union management cooperation and employee performance.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	42.253	1	42.253	123.995	0.000
Residual	100.184	294	0.341		
Total	142.437	295			

Note: a Dependent variable: Employee performance.
 b Predictors: (Constant), union management cooperation activity.

Table 7 presents the ANOVA results for union-management co-operation and its influence on employee performance among doctors in public service health sector. The F-statistic of 123.995 and the associated p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) signify that the regression model has a significant goodness of fit in determining the influence of union-management co-operation activity on employee performance. The model explains a considerable portion of the variance in employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Table 8. Coefficients of estimates for union management cooperation and employee performance.

	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.147	0.129		8.883	0.000
Union-management cooperation activity	0.518	0.047	0.545	11.135	0.000

Note: Dependent variable: Employee performance.

Results from Table 8 which presents the coefficients of estimates, showed that union-management cooperation activity had a statistically significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.545$, $t = 11.135$, $p = 0.000$). As the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that union-management cooperation has a significant and positive influence on employee performance. The regression results further revealed that union-management cooperation has a significant positive effect on employee performance among doctors in public service health sector. It suggests that for each unit increase in union-management cooperation activity, there is an expected increase of 0.545 units in employee performance. Therefore, based on the significant estimate, the following regression equation was derived to determine the influence of union-management cooperation on employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya, Kenya.

$$Y = 1.147 + 0.518x_4 + \epsilon \quad (\text{Model 1})$$

Where;

Y = Employee performance, X_4 = Union-management cooperation activity, ϵ = Error term.

The above model shows that one unit increase in union-management cooperation activity increase employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya by .518 units. These findings align with Cooper and Schindler (2014) who opine that most contemporary organizations are tired of toxic and militant relations and are abandoning the classical anti-union ways for partnerships and Nyaencha (2022) who opine that active unions wish to cooperate or even partner with management. This also concurs with a study by Wagar (2013) which found that unions engaged in employee-management cooperation. However, this is in contrast with the study by Gurunathan and Seng (2016) who found that there was an adverse union-management relationship in the Cambodian garment industry. In Kenya too in the words of Masika (2016) the government needs to embrace fair

labour strategies by constantly engaging employers and trade unions on reciprocal respect and not only during unrests.

4.6. Moderating Effect of Employee Engagement on the Relationship between Union Management Cooperation Activity and Employee Performance

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to establish the moderated effect of employee engagement on the relationship between union-management cooperation and employee performance and the findings were presented in Tables 9 (model summary), 10 (ANOVA) and 11 (coefficients of estimates).

Table 9. Model summary for employee engagement on the relationship between union-management cooperation activity and employee performance.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics		df1	df2	Sig. F change
					R square change	F change			
1	0.545a	0.297	0.294	0.584	0.297	123.995	1	294	0.000
2	0.726b	0.527	0.523	0.480	0.230	142.376	1	293	0.000

Note: a Predictors: (Constant), UMCA.
 b Predictors: (Constant), UMCA, UMCA*EE.
 UMCA =Union-management cooperation activity, EP=Employee performance, EE=Employee engagement.

Finding in Table 10 showed that after introducing employee engagement in the relationship between union-management cooperation activity and employee performance, R squared increased from 29.7% to 52.7%, thus employee engagement improves the relationship between union organizing activity and employee performance by 23.0% (R²Δ =0.230).

Table 10. ANOVA for employee engagement on the relationship between union-management cooperation activity and employee performance.

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	42.253	1	42.253	123.995	0.000
	Residual	100.184	294	0.341		
	Total	142.437	295			
2	Regression	75.015	2	37.507	162.998	0.000
	Residual	67.422	293	0.23		
	Total	142.437	295			

Note: UMCA =Union-management cooperation activity, EP=Employee performance, EE=Employee engagement.

Findings showed that F statistics was 162.998, with p value=0.000, indicating a goodness fit in the moderated effect of employee engagement on the relationship between union-management cooperation activity and employee performance. This significant p-value indicates that the regression model for assessing the moderating effect of employee engagement had a goodness of fit, meaning that it adequately captures the relationship between union-management cooperation activity and employee performance when accounting for the influence of employee engagement.

Table 11. Coefficients for employee engagement on the relationship between union-management cooperation activity and employee performance.

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
		B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.147	0.129	0.545	8.883	0.000
	UMCA	0.518	0.047		11.135	0.000
2	(Constant)	1.155	0.106	0.234	10.889	0.000
	UMCA	0.222	0.046		4.880	0.000
	UMCA×EE	0.098	0.008		11.932	0.000

Note: UMCA =Union-management cooperation activity, EP=Employee performance, EE=Employee engagement.

Table 11 coefficient of interaction (UMCA*EE) was statistically significant. However, results from table 7c indicated a significant coefficient ($\beta=.572, p=.000<0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the study inferred that employee engagement has a significant positive moderating effect on the relationship between union-management cooperation and employee performance since the p-value was 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it was concluded that employee engagement moderates the relationship between union-management cooperation and employee performance. This suggests that it is prudent for employee engagement to be articulated in HR policies and manuals. This implies that the optimal model is:

$$Y = 1.155 + 0.222x_4 + .098x_4 * Z \text{ (Model 2)}$$

Where;

Y = Employee performance, X_4 = Union-management cooperation, Z= Employee engagement, ϵ = Error term. These findings are in line with [Akkas et al. \(2015\)](#) who indicated that the concept of employee engagement is new but very attractive and found to be effective in Japan and western countries and in the new economic and business world, where, typified by stiff foreign competition, technological changes, and deregulation, it has become even more popular. However, [Khusanova, Kang, and Choi \(2021\)](#) did not find a moderation in the association effect between meaningfulness and engagement. Further, [Kumar and Pansari \(2014\)](#) assert that employee engagement is the most significant individual and organizational challenge in the current century's dynamic work situation and dealing with it is the current practice in building one's capacity to perform. This is in tandem with a study by [Amir and Khan \(2020\)](#) which found a moderating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between personality traits and team performance. Furthermore, in their study, [Deepa and Mohamed \(2017\)](#) also found that communication had a causal relationship with employee engagement, which had causal relationships with organizational management and total quality management with employee engagement. Similarly, [Mishra and Kodwani \(2019\)](#) found a moderating effect of employee engagement on relationship conflict and perception of organizational politics. However, none of the studies determined the interaction effect of employee engagement in the relationship between trade union activities and employee performance.

5. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Grounded on the inferential research findings, union-management cooperation activity is key to employee performance. The study outlined that the presence of consultative meetings, advocacy committees and appointment of shop stewards were indicators of union-management cooperation since they encourage participative decision-making, which is fodder for employee performance. Conversely, there was a lack of union-management collaboration and consultation meetings. In most stations, shop steward involvement was either wanting or totally lacking. Hence the study provided confirmation on lack of strategies of union-management cooperation in Kenya's public health service. Union-management cooperation activity is therefore key to employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Finally, based on the inferential findings that employee engagement significantly moderates the relationship between union-management cooperation activity and employee performance. The study thus delineated that elements employee job satisfaction, identification, commitment, and loyalty indicate the presence of employee engagement. This infers that reasonable workload, availability of individual mentorship, effective communication, employee recognition and well-wishing as some of the employee engagement facets that enhance the effect of trade union activities on employee performance. The study interviews highlighted the absence of employee engagement policy to help mediate the relationship between Union-management cooperation activity and performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study thus concluded that in the presence of employee

engagement, Union-management cooperation activity highly enhance employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya.

6. MANAGERIAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study underscores the ambiguous nature of cooperation between the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists, and Dentists Union (KMPDU) and the government, revealing a lack of clear policies to guide harmonious relations between trade unions and management in the public service sector. This ambiguity perpetuates a sense of mistrust between management and trade unions, hindering their potential collaboration to enhance employee performance. The study advocates for legislative measures to encourage and regulate union-management cooperation, particularly in Nairobi County, which could bolster the performance of doctors in the public health sector, leading to a more robust healthcare system and increased respect for healthcare professionals. Furthermore, the study raises concerns about the underappreciation of employee engagement strategies within Kenya's public service sector. It emphasizes the importance of employee engagement as a moderator in the relationship between trade union activities and employee performance, urging both the KMPDU and the government to recognize and invest in this framework. Integrating employee engagement into labor relations policies could lead to significant improvements in the quality of healthcare services, the achievement of universal healthcare goals, and sustainable development objectives, especially within the management of the public health system in Nairobi County.

The study emphasizes the importance of embracing union-management cooperation within organizations, particularly in the context of the public medical sector in Nairobi County. It suggests that both management and trade unions should utilize the study findings to foster cooperation, aligning with the tripartite principle and benefiting all stakeholders involved. By working collaboratively, there is potential for improving the quality of public health services, enhancing the execution of health plans, and fulfilling regional and global commitments. Additionally, the study highlights the significance of employee engagement as a moderator in the relationship between trade union activities and employee performance. While this concept is yet to be fully adopted in Kenya's public service sector, the study underscores its importance and urges management to invest in it as a national measure for organizational success. In light of limited resources, particularly human resources, employee engagement emerges as a potential solution to enhance employee performance, particularly among doctors in the public health sector. Consequently, the study provides valuable insights for managers to define employee engagement indicators and explore strategic options for its adoption and implementation as a fundamental aspect of human resource management, especially within the healthcare sector.

7. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study authenticated the theory of industrial jurisprudence as the value of collective bargaining and contract administration activities. The theory appreciates the need to establish labour relations laws, especially to protect bargaining agreements during signing and implementation, hence ensure the worker is not exposed but is protected. Say that for over fifty years, the theory of industrial jurisprudence has been the foundation of industrial relations law by providing justice to the employee. Also as noted by [Gyesie \(2017\)](#) the theory of industrial jurisprudence is the basis of socio-economic justice and democratic industrial relations. In Kenya, this theory has posed a paradigm shift to the human resource management by buttressing labour relations laws as they relate to union activities, hence minimizes industrial disputes, which are very prevalent among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya, and increases employee performance.

8. CONTRIBUTION TO NEW KNOWLEDGE

The study findings present a novel and comprehensive framework that integrates union-management cooperation as determinants of employee performance within the context of the public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya. While previous studies have examined these variables separately, this study bridges the gap by combining them into a unified model. The newly developed model highlights the positive impact of union-management cooperation on employee performance and elucidates the moderating role of employee engagement in this relationship. Unlike traditional studies that primarily focused on direct theoretical linkages between trade union activities and employee performance, this research sheds light on the previously overlooked moderation effect, offering new insights into the causal relationship. By doing so, it contributes to a paradigm shift in understanding these dynamics, particularly within the African and Kenyan contexts, and provides valuable insights for human resource management professionals and researchers. Additionally, the study enriches existing knowledge by proposing a comprehensive theoretical framework grounded in industrial jurisprudence theory, further advancing the understanding of union-management cooperation in enhancing employee performance.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, the relations between trade unions and management is mostly frosty, therefore affecting employee performance. It is therefore recommended that a structure should be established to ensure union-management relationships are more collaborative than adversarial. If adopted, the co-existence will mitigate the negative factors and result in amiable co-existence and hence a thriving employee performance, especially among doctors in public service health sector Nairobi County. The research also determined employee engagement to be a significant moderator between trade union activities and employee performance. However, the variable was found to be invisible in the public service rules and regulations. Hence taking cognizance of this finding, it is endorsed that there should be deliberate effort to include employee engagement model in the human resource management policy guidelines. This will go a long way in enhancing the relationship between trade union activities and employee performance, more so among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya (Gold & Smith, 2022) argue that in the 21st century, employee engagement policies are under-researched.

10. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study evaluated the influence of union-management cooperation activity on employee performance among doctors in public service health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya as moderated by employee engagement. There are doctors in public service health sector in other counties and public servants in other sectors, like public universities, who face similar problems. It is thus prudent to conduct similar research in different contexts like other counties and public sectors, such as public universities. It could be interesting to establish if comparable outcomes could be found, which may authenticate the generalizability of the current findings. Empirical information on the interaction effect employee engagement concept is still deficient, especially in Africa, including the Kenyan public service health sector. It could be interesting and remarkable if further research could be conducted on the topic so as to contribute to the database and to better understand the concept. From the qualitative findings, it emerged that devolution and private practice during working hours are important factors in determining the level of performance of doctors in public service health sector. Therefore, future research should focus on these variables, which might assist in solving the doctors in public service health sector' performance challenges and advance overall public service health care status. Additionally, there are other variables, other than employee engagement, that may moderate the relationship between trade union activities and employee performance, which were unobserved by the current study. Therefore, focusing

on these other variables, like employee participation and involvement, in future research may assist solve the employee performance uncertainty and motivate individual employees, organizations, and nations to progress.

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