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Effect of Employee Relations on Employee Performance and Organizational Performance-Study of Small Organizations in Tanzania

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Keywords: *employee relations, employee performance, organizational performance, small organizations and tanzania.*

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Abstract- Employee relations is one of the key fundamental elements of organizational performance, prosperity and sustainability. Good employee relations results in a highly committed, motivated and loyal employees in the organizations. The aim of this paper is to examine the effect of employee relations on employee performance and organizational performance and at the same time identify various employee relations practices used by small organizations in Tanzania. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design and used a stratified random sampling technique to select a sample size of 387 respondents from selected small organizations in Tanzania. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis and the results presented using tables. The findings of the study show that small organizations in Tanzania are aware of the benefits of maintaining good employee relations and correct remedial actions taken to minimize poor employee relations in the organization. The findings further indicate a positive significant relationship between employee relations and employee performance as well as between employee relations and organization performance. Moreover, the findings reveal the use of unfair labour practices in small organizations in Tanzania. The study recommends that small organizations in Tanzania should focus more on implementing fair labour practices and building effective and sustainable employee relations that will ensure their growth and survival.

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I. Introduction

Organizations cannot perform better and achieve its objectives if there is a bad relationship between employees and employer, therefore it is very important for managers to create and maintain good relationship with their employees. Effective employee and management relationship is vital to the workplace whether at the time of recruitment, during an employees' tenure or at the time of separation (Rose, 2008). Good employer-employee relations is essential to the organization because it inspires employees to work better and produce more results (Burns, 2012). The application of human relations in managing human resource is critical in today's business competitive environment (Christen, Iyer & Soberman, 2006). Factors such as job satisfaction is achieved when there is a great working relationship between labour and management (Boyle, 2006). Yes, organizations can have competent, qualified and motivated employees but if there is no peace and harmony at the workplace their performance will be in danger. Because the relationship between the employer and the employee is very crucial, employers need to pay attention to this relationship if they want their businesses to grow and succeed (Bhattacharya, 2008) and that firms should actively seek good employee relations whether or not they are bound by union contracts (Pearce and Robinson (2009). Organizations need employees who can peacefully work together towards the achievement of the set objectives and goals, and this can only be achieved if there is a good employee relations in the organization as the objectives of employee relationship is to achieve harmonious employee relations and minimize conflict practices in employment (Torrington & Hall, 1998). Employee relationship management has many documented positive effect in organizations such as strengthening corporate communication and culture, fostering about company products, services and customer providing real-time access to company training, targeting information to an employee based on their needs (Wargborn, 2008).

a) Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that in today's competitive business environment employee relations is one of the pillars and crucial functions of human resource management which leads to effective employee performance and organizational performance. Small organizations in Tanzania seems to throw employee relations behind them by not giving it special attention and priority, as a result, they are still struggling to establish and maintain effective employee relations, this causes unnecessary disputes in these organizations which in turn affect their performance. Poor relations between the employer and employees among organizations operating in the globally and locally markets has become the challenge (Kaliski, 2007).

b) Research Hypothesis

H_1: Employee relations has a significant effect on employee performance and organizational performance.

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II. Literature Review

a) The perception of employee relations

According to Torrington and Hall (1998), the relationship between employees and management is a framework of organizational justice consisting of organizational culture and management styles as well as rules and procedural sequence for grievance and conflict management. Gennard and Judge (2002) stated that employee relations is a study of the rules, regulations and agreements by which employees are managed both as individuals and as a collective group. Lewis et al (2003) explained that employee relations suggest a wider employment canvas being covered with equal importance attached to non-union employment arrangements and white collar jobs. Armstrong (2005) observed that employee relations is to manage the relationship between employer and employees with the ultimate objectivity of achieving the optimum level of productivity in terms of goods and services, employee motivation taking preventive measures to resolve problems that adversely affect the working environment. Walton (1985) narrated that the unitary viewpoint of employee relations is the belief that management and employees share the same concerns and it is therefore in both their interests to cooperate. Perkins and Shortland (2006) advocated that employee relations is concerned with the social economic relationship that forms and revolves around a contract between the parties to perform work in return for employment benefits such as remuneration. Clarke (2001) commented that effective employee relationship management requires cooperation between managers representatives and employees, that good relationship between employer and employee do not just happen but they are the result of a strategy and activities that employee relations managers design to improve communication between employees and management (Mayhew, 1985). George and Jones (2008) said that employee relations involve the communication and relationships that in the end contribute to satisfactory productivity, job satisfaction, motivation and morale of the employees. Consequently, Foot and Hook (2008) highlighted that the right of employer on employer and employee relationship is to control work performance, integrate employee in the organization's structure and management system and create a mutual trust environment, confidence and supply of enough and reasonable work while employees obey lawful and reasonable orders, maintain fidelity and work with due diligence and care.

b) Factors leading to effective employee relations in the organization

Gomez-Mejia et al (2001) argued that for organizational members to perceive employee relations management practices positively, the organizational leadership needs to put emphasis on gaining support from employees, having mutual trust and confidence building, allowing freedom of association, improving career and salary tracks, retirement benefits, and retaining measures. Pearce and Robinson (2009) observed that organizations should strive to satisfy their employees with good pay, good supervision and good stimulating work. Mayhew (1985) inferred that best employee relationship management practices incorporate labour and employment laws, resourcefulness and human resource expertise in developing practices that improve working relationships. Purcell and Ahlstrand (1994) insisted on the need of the existence of a distinctive set of written guiding principles which set parameters to and signposts for management action regarding the way employees are treated and how particular events are handled. Lewis et al (2003) contended that it is good to involve employees direct in decisions that go beyond their immediate work tasks and given opportunity to control their work situation in a manner that benefits the organization also to have a managerial policy where employees and employers share goals and agree on the means to achieve them, their involvement is very important because participation in goal setting has been found relating to acceptance and subsequent commitment to the established goals which leads to favourable outcomes in terms of performance and attitudes (Harzing & Ruysseveldt, 2004).

According to Shweitzer and Lyons (2008) factors that lead to good employee relations in the organization include employee empowerment and involvement, initiating employee suggestions, conflict management and grievance redress measures, facilitating collective bargaining, expertize training and development, encouraging teamwork and transparency in communicating. Ivancevich (2001) supported that employee empowerment improves employee relations because it contributes directly to organizational objectives by increasing skill sets and granting authority to the employees to make a decision that would traditionally be made by managers. Kovach (1995) focused on the need of effective communication that it is one of the most important factors which either improves or spoils the relationship among employees, employees with open lines of communication with managers are more likely to build effective work relationships with those managers, increase their organizational identification and enhance their performance which at last contributes to organization productivity (Tsai, Chuang & Hsieh, 2009).

III. Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design and used a stratified random sampling technique to select a sample size of 387 respondents from the target population of the study. The data was collected using questionnaires and interviews and

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analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis with the help of SPSS software version 22.0.

IV. Results and Discussions

a) Causes of poor employee relations in the organization

Table 4.1: Causes of poor employee relations in small organizations

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low and inbalance salary	32	8.3	8.3
Poor working conditions	29	7.5	15.8
Lack of attractive work incentives	38	9.8	25.6
Unfair labour practices	42	10.9	36.4
Ineffective communication between management and employees	25	6.5	42.9
Lack of supervision and management skills among supervisors and managers	27	7.0	49.9
Indiscipline among employees	24	6.2	56.1
unfair treatment of employees by the management	30	7.8	63.8
Management failure to pay attention to employee personal problems	28	7.2	71.1
Ineffective of delegation of authority to employees by the management	24	6.2	77.3
Unfair redressal of employee grievances by the management	27	7.0	84.2
Poor conflict management	30	7.8	92.0
Lack of transparency in communication	31	8.0	100.0
Total	387	100.0	

The study wanted to know the causes of poor employee relations in small organizations. The results in table 4.1 depict that 8.3 % of the respondents mentioned low and inbalance salary as a cause of poor employee relations in the small organization, 7.5% mentioned poor working conditions, 9.8% mentioned lack of attractive work incentives, 10.9% mentioned unfair labour practices while 6.5% mentioned ineffective communication between management and employees. Consequently, 7% of the respondents mentioned lack of supervision and management skills among supervisors and managers as a cause of poor employee relations in the organization, 6.2% mentioned indiscipline among employees, 7.8% mentioned unfair treatment of employees by the management and 7.2% mentioned failure by the management to pay attention to employees' personal problems. Moreover, 6.2% of the respondents mentioned ineffective of delegation of authority to employees by the management as a cause of poor labour relations in the organization, 7% mentioned unfair redressal of employee grievances by the management, 7.8% mentioned poor conflict management while 8% mentioned lack of transparency in communication as a cause of poor employee relations in small organizations. Brookins and Media (2002) were of the view that employee conflict in the workplace is a common occurrence, resulting from the differences in employees' personalities and values. Havenga (2002) contended that causes of conflict at the level of the organization could also include resource availability, affirmative action programmes, the scope of the content of workload, the introduction of new management techniques and differences of a cultural and racial nature. Consequently, Nelson and Quick (2001) indicated that there are conflicts that develop from within the organization and those that emerge as a result of individual differences among employees. Vecchio (2000) was of the same view that communication is infrequently considered as a source of conflict.

b) Remedial actions used to minimize poor employee relations in the organization

Table 4.2: Remedial used by small organizations to minimize poor employee relations

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Collective bargaining meetings	144	37.2	37.2
Workers representative committees	114	29.5	66.7
Joint consultation meetings	129	33.3	100.0
Total	387	100.0	

Table 4.2 shows the remedial actions used by small organizations to minimize and to solve poor employee relations identified in organizations. The results indicate that 37.2% of the total respondents use collective bargaining meetings to solve poor employee relations in the organizations, 29.5% use workers representative committees while 33.3% use joint consultation meetings to solve poor employee relations

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in the small organization. In line with the study results, Sweney and Mc Farlin (2005) were of the view that effective approaches adopted in conflict management within the organization like coaching, training, mediation and facilitation will enhance employee and employer relations thus improved job satisfaction.

c) Effect of employee relations on employee performance

The study wanted to know the effect of employee relations on the performance of employee in small organizations and the results are shown in the tables below;

Table 4.3: Good employee relations increase employees' working morale

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	195	50.4	50.4
Agree	151	39.0	89.4
Neutral	14	3.6	93.0
Disagree	14	3.6	96.6
Strongly Disagree	13	3.4	100.0
Total	387	100.0	

The results in table 4.3 reveal that 50.4% of the respondents strongly agree that good employee relations increase employees' morale at work, 39% agree, 3.6% were neutral, 3.6% disagree with the statement while 3.4% strongly disagree that good employee relations increase employees' morale. Based on the cumulative percentage which shows that majority of the respondents agreeing to the statement, this implies that employee relations has a great effect on employees' working morale. Grant (2007) supported that improvement in the management of employee relationships in organizations brings more positive aspects to the firm than just to increase employee motivation. The results of a study done by Delaney and Huselid (1996) proved that a set of fit employee relations practices which stimulate various attributes of employees including personal and professional skills, motivation and work structure are significantly positively related to their performance that leads to ultimate organizational performance.

Table 4.4: Good employee relations improve discipline to workers

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	169	43.7	43.7
Agree	173	44.7	88.4
Neutral	16	4.1	92.5
Disagree	16	4.1	96.6
Strongly Disagree	13	3.4	100.0
Total	387	100.0	

The study wanted to know whether good employee relations in small organizations improve discipline to workers or not, it was observed that 43.7% of the respondents strongly agree that good employee relations improve workers' discipline, 44.7% agree, 4.1% were neutral while 4.1% disagree and 3.4% strongly disagree that good employees improve discipline to workers.

Table 4.5: Good employee relations promotes teamwork in the organization

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	219	56.6	56.6
Agree	134	34.6	91.2
Neutral	26	6.7	97.9
Disagree	4	1.0	99.0
Strongly Disagree	4	1.0	100.0
Total	387	100.0	

The results in table 4.5 highlights that majority of the respondents of the study that is 56.6% strongly agree that good employee relations promote teamwork in small organizations, also 34.6% agree with the statement. However, 6.7% of the respondents were neutral to the statement, 1.0% disagree while again 1.0% strongly disagree that good employee relations promote teamwork in the small organization. This result is supported by the study done by Keith and Newstrom (1989) which found that employee relationship promotes teamwork which achieves organizational goals. Schweitzer and Lyons (2008) also supported that organizations normally engage in various employee relationships management practices such as teamwork to develop healthy relationships and extract the best out of each team member.

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Table 4.6: Good employee relations improve employee work commitment

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	205	53.0	53.0
Agree	138	35.7	88.6
Neutral	36	9.3	97.9
Disagree	4	1.0	99.0
Strongly Disagree	4	1.0	100.0
Total	387	100.0	

It was noted that 53% of the total respondents of the study strongly agree that mainting good employee relations improve employees' commitment at work, relatively, 35.7% also agree with the statement. Consequently, in responding to this statement, 9.3% of the total respondents of the study were neutral, 1.0% disagree and 1.0% strongly disagree that good employee relations improve employees' commitment at work. Because the results show that 88.7% of the respondents which is the majority agreeing with the statement, this implies that both the management and employees who were the respondents of the study know very well that maintaining good employee relations in the organization helps to improve employees' commitment at work, it is believed that one of the antecedent determinants of workers performance is employee commitment (Ali at al, 2010) and employees with sense of employee commitment are less likely to engage in withdrawal behaviour and more willing to accept change (Lo et al, 2009).

Table 4.7: Good employee relations reduces employee turnover in the organization

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	224	57.9	57.9
Agree	123	31.8	89.7
Neutral	24	6.2	95.9
Disagree	6	1.6	97.4
Strongly Disagree	10	2.6	100.0
Total	387	100.0	

The study also wanted to know whether good employee relations has effect on employee turnover and from the results of the study, 57.9% strongly agree and 31.8% agree that good employee relations reduce employee turnover in the organization, Unlikely, 1.6% disagree and 2.6% strongly disagree while 6.2% of the total respondents were neutral to the statement. Huselid (1995) supported that employee relations result in organization performance also lower employee turnover.

d) Effect of employee relations on organizational performance

The sought to know the effect of employee relations on labour turnover in small organizations, the results are shown in the tables below;

Table 4.8: Good employee relations leads to high productivity in the organization

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	222	57.4	57.4
Agree	135	34.9	92.2
Neutral	16	4.1	96.4
Disagree	7	1.8	98.2
Strongly Disagree	7	1.8	100.0
Total	387	100.0	

From the results of the study, 57.4% of the respondents strongly agree while 34.9% agree that good employee relations lead to high productivity in the organization. Contrary, 1.8% disagree, again 1.8% strongly disagree that good employee relations lead to high productivity in the organization while 4.1 % of the respondents were neutral to the statement. The result of this study is in line with the result of the study done by Huselid (1995) which found that employee relations result in high productivity.

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Table 4.9: Good employee relations ensures optimum use of scarce resources in the organization

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	175	45.2	45.2
Agree	164	42.4	87.6
Neutral	30	7.8	95.3
Disagree	11	2.8	98.2
Strongly Disagree	7	1.8	100.0
Total	387	100.0	

The results in table 4.9 depict that 45.2% of the respondents strongly agree that good employee relations ensure optimum use of scarce resources in the organization, 42.4% agree while 7.8% were neutral, 2.8% disagree and 1.8% strongly disagree.

Table 4.10: Good employee relations result in effective communication in the organization

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	230	59.4	59.4
Agree	138	35.7	95.1
Neutral	4	1.0	96.1
Disagree	10	2.6	98.7
Strongly Disagree	5	1.3	100.0
Total	387	100.0	

The result of the study in table 4.10 indicate that 59.4% of the total respondents strongly agree that good employee relations result in effective communication in the organization, 35.7% agree while 1.0% were neutral to the statement. On the other hand, 2.6% of the total respondents disagree and 1.3% strongly disagree that good employee relations result in effective communication in the organization. The results are in line with the results of Howes (2010) findings who found that better communication and attention to the personal needs of employees improves employee's motivation and performance. Relatively, Kaliski (2007) supported that effective employee relations enhances positive communication and attitude between management and employees, promotes the overall wellbeing of employees during their tenure at the company and helps in preventing and resolving problems involving employees' that affect work situation. Similarly, Amessa and Drakeb (2003) supported that communication is one of the critical that enhance the spirit of teamwork within the organization.

Table 4.11: Good employee relations facilitate changes in the organization

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	174	45.0	45.0
Agree	164	42.4	87.3
Neutral	17	4.4	91.7
Disagree	12	3.1	94.8
Strongly Disagree	20	5.2	100.0
Total	387	100.0	

The study results reveal that 45% of the total respondents strongly agree that good employee relations facilitate changes in the organization, 42.4% agree, 4.4% were neutral to the statement, while 3.1% disagree and 1.8% strongly disagree that good employee relations facilitate changes in the organization. Because the result further indicates that the majority of the total respondents which is 87.4% agreeing to the statement, it implies that maintaining good employee relations has a positive effect on change implementation. The findings are supported by the study by Ahmed et al (1996) which found that employee relations and flexibility are emerging as competitive weapons that allow organizations to counteract market evolution and competitive.

H_1: Employee relations has a significant effect on employee performance and organizational performance.

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Table 4.12: Correlation analysis results for employee relations, employee performance and organizational performance

Correlation Matrix				
		Employee Relations	Employee Performance	Organizational Performance
Employee Relations	Pearson Correlation	1	.329**	.209**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	387	387	387
Employee performance	Pearson Correlation	.329**	1	-.080
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.115
	N	387	387	387
Organizational Performance	Pearson Correlation	.209**	-.080	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.115	
	N	387	387	387

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

The results of correlation between employee relations, employee performance and organizational performance in table 4.12 indicate that there is a positive statistical significant relationship between employee relations and employee performance also between employee relations and organizational performance whereby employee relations and employee performance is r(387) =+.329, employee relations and organizational performance is r(387) =+.209. the significance value was observed at .01 level. Since significant value (P-value =.000), the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The findings of the study corresponds with the findings of the study by James and Nickson (2016) on influence of employee relations on organization performance of private universities in Kenya which found that employee relations has a positive significant influence on organizational performance with (r=0.532) However, these results supersede the results of the study done by Muhammad et al (2013) on the impact of employee relations on employee performance in hospitality industry in Pakistan which indicated medium positive correlation between employee performance and employee relations with R=0.529. Moreover, the study by Kuzu and Derya (2014) on the effect of employee relationship and knowledge sharing on employee performance: An empirical research on service industry revealed that employee relationships have a mid-level positive association with employee performance with (r=0.602).

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

Maintaining harmonious relations is very important for the survival, prosperity and growth of the organization. Good and healthy employee relations leads to better organizational performance. The study found that small organizations are aware of the benefits of maintaining good employee relations and correct remedial actions to minimize poor employee relations in the organization. Similarly, the study found that there is a positive significant relationship between employee relations and employee performance as well as between employee relations and organizational performance. Moreover, the study found that the use unfair labour practices is a major cause of poor employee relations in the small organizations in Tanzania. Therefore the study recommends a need for small organizations to start implementing fair labour practices throughout their operations and do away with unfair labour practices. Furthermore, the study recommends that small organizations in Tanzania should focus more on building effective and sustainable employee relations that will ensure their growth and survival.

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