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COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AS AN IMPERATIVE FOR ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

¹ *Benedette Nduta Kabera* & ² *Dr. Godfrey Muigai Kinyua, PhD*

¹ *Master Student, Department of Business Administration, School of Business, Economic and Tourism, Kenyatta University, Kenya*

² *Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, School of Business, Economic and Tourism, Kenyatta University, Kenya*

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ABSTRACT

Community of practice has attracted attention as a way to spread knowledge and ultimately improving the performance of organizations. Government and private organization globally recognize the fundamental role of community of practice in fostering performance of companies hence attaining a competitive success in a dynamic market. Non-governmental organizations are a foundation upon which strategies for equality, economic and social development are anchored. However, studies have tended to focus on the relationship between non-governmental organizations and communities with few reflections on how internal non-governmental organizations dynamics contribute to their inefficiency and inept community impact. This study therefore sought to examine the extent to which community of practice is contributing to organizational performance and ultimately the quality of results and impact received by the community of non-governmental organizations work in Kiambu County, Kenya. The target population was 324 non-governmental organizations operating in Kiambu County. A sample of 179 program managers was selected using stratified sampling technique. Empirical data for the analysis were gathered using structured questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the data collection tool was assessed to confirm the suitability of the tool for use in the study. Descriptive analysis, and inferential analysis were conducted on the data set gathered from the field. The study established that community of practice have significant effects on organizational performance in non-governmental organizations working in Kiambu county. The study concluded that community of practice, significantly affected the organizational performance in non-governmental organizations working in Kiambu county. The study recommended that management of non-governmental organizations in Kiambu County should ensure that there is training for its employees in regard to incorporating lessons learned into normal work practices.

Keywords: *Community of Practice, Organizational Performance, Non-Governmental Organizations*

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INTRODUCTION

Overall, it has been evidenced that establishing and nurturing of vibrant Community of practice can significantly improve organizational performance when leveraging the collective intelligence, know-how, and creativity of the employees towards innovation and collaboration. Looking at the public service boards of Kenya, Kisilu and Kinyua (2020) aptly and in consultation with about 98 employees in the Kenya's Makeni county found that, community of practice contributes positively to organizational performance and inadvertently improves service delivery. It is therefore safe to conclude that, community of practice and perhaps institutional social cohesion are cornerstones for satisfactory organizational performance thanks to mutual support among members to produce, hold onto, disseminate, and use knowledge pertinent to the organization. The networks that are formed are fostered and strengthened to use learning and information transfer to develop strategic competencies inside the company.

Whether these findings are applicable across Kenya or universally is tested through this study which focuses on Kenya's Kiambu county with the view of contributing to the improvement of livelihoods of communities that since COVID have seen non-governmental organizations impacts and services trickle down. Before Kisilu and Kinyua, Kalanzo (2012), had with a narrow focus on World Vision, an international non-governmental organizations with offices in Kenya found that community of practice is essential in organizational learning given the critical role they play in promoting knowledge sharing among members and their propensity to steer organizations towards a human-sensitive work environment which promotes social cohesion and capacity building amongst its staff – a critical factor which this study on the Kiambu community investigated.

Statement of the Problem

The stakeholders and leaders of an organization play a critical role in defining its mission, vision, and strategic goals, as well as ensuring it meets its set objectives. They carry knowledge that is embedded in their mind which is very sticky to be extracted directly. However, they are bound to leave the office either through resignation, layoffs, retirement or death. In such cases, the only confidence that the successor would carry the same vision as the predecessor depends on how well they utilize dimensions of knowledge transfer such as community of practice. It is therefore a critical act in the lifespan of any non-governmental organization because of the importance to generate, share and transfer the knowledge within the organization for the purpose of retaining its competitive advantage.

The empirical literature is definite on the vital role played by community of practice in impacting the operational performance of non-governmental organizations within Kiambu County, Kenya (Dashti et al, 2019, Ding, Shao & Fu, 2018). Ibidunni, Agbi, and Kehinde, (2022) studied the relationship between community of practice and organizational performance. The outcomes demonstrated a positive connection between community of practice and organizational performance in the view where the management allows people to make new connections, allows time and space for relationship building and finding of ways of communicating the customs, culture and language of the organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Resource-Based View

Edith Penrose's 1959 was the theory's primary source, where unexploited managerial resources were cited as the major engine for growth. She acknowledged that internal managerial resources both drive and limit the expansion that any single firm can undertake. Later, in 1984 and 1991, Wernerfelt and Barney's work respectively were critical in magnifying the resource-based theory it became the prevailing paradigm in strategic planning and strategic management. Barney (1991) posits that a resource possessing the capacity to generate a competitive advantage ought to fulfill several criteria identified as VRIO, namely value, rarity, imitability, and organization. When an organization can take advantage of opportunities and neutralize threats,

its resources and competencies are deemed valuable. Therefore, the organization's resources ought to allow it to fulfill the requirements that are essential to the success of its business environment.

According to resource-based theory, the resources of a firm may either have a direct/positive and indirect/negative outcome on the performance of an organization (Ahmed, Khuwaja, Brohi, Othman & Bin, 2018). If an organization can use its resources strategically then its assets directly impact market performance while indirectly influencing the profitability of a firm. For example, according to Aytenfisu, 2020, an organization may enhance its performance only by using the knowledge of cooperative alliances and also making inventions. Similarly, a firm may specialize in the knowledge to gain huge returns from inventive and inimitable products. Additionally, the superior performance of organizations is only based on the learning of how to manage cooperative associations.

Using the language from the VRIO framework, it is concluded that the focus on the relationship between an organization and its resources explains a positive performance if the resources are well utilized. Consequently, having valuable, rare and difficult-to-imitate knowledge resources is superior to organizational performance. An organization's knowledge can only be optimally utilized when it is transferred because knowledge is static in nature and it has limited value unless it is transferred (Aytenfisu, 2020). Hence, putting into context the current research, the resource-based view is considered as a theoretical base for knowledge transfer and organizational performance as the research dimensions.

Knowledge Compilation Theory

As suggested by John R. Anderson, compilation of knowledge is the second transmission method of interest. In the theory context, a compendium of knowledge has been provided to describe how the command is used to solve problems (Neves & Anderson, 2016). This cognitive process works by interpreting a factual statement in a systematic and precise, step-by-step manner, resulting in new production policies as a side consequence. The outcome is a procedural description of the material of descriptive knowledge that gives particular goals, which is optimized via rule composition (Bova, Capelli, Mengel, & Slivovsky, 2016). The knowledge-compiling process functions as a translator, converting declarative information such as suggestions, directions, and tactics into a collection of processes and activities that can be used to resolve conflicts.

The knowledge compilation theory is seen as a tool for translation that converts declarative knowledge into a series of steps and activities that may be taken to address issues (Bova, Capelli, Mengel, & Slivovsky, 2016). Since declarative knowledge is the foundation of knowledge compilation theory, it can be applied in a variety of scenarios where knowledge needs to be organized and connected to specific problem-solving objectives. According to the Knowledge compilation theory, typical problems are validity, satisfiability and implication (Neves, & Anderson, 2016). Different compilation languages should therefore be used to solve the different problems. This motivates the need to know if a problem can be compiled into smaller-sized expressions for ease of understanding.

Since knowledge is employed in composition, it may be employed in many applications because learning about the particular problem situation has not been processed or linked to objectives (Neves & Anderson, 2016). This method represents a compromise between applicability and efficiency in that it is applicable in a wide range of settings. Still, it necessitates a complex and time-consuming process of the application process to convert information into actions. Knowledge compilation has empirical support, although the evidence is not substantial. Knowledge compilation theory is therefore used to provide the theoretical underpinning to both knowledge transfer and organizational performance in this study.

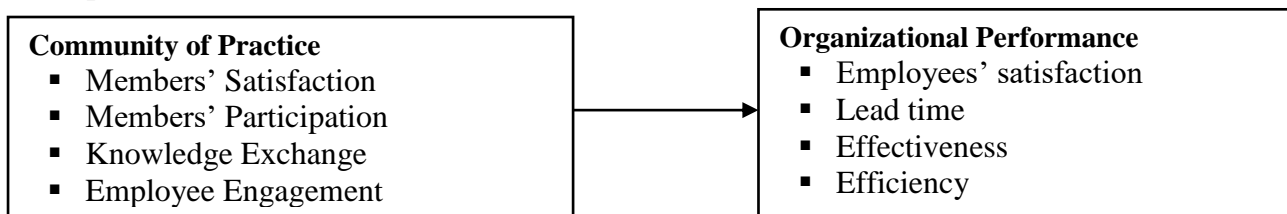
Empirical Literature Review

A community of practice, according to Jones and Mahon (2018), is a collection of individuals who share a profession, skill, or area of knowledge or who participate in a process of collective learning. Because of their

shared interest in a certain subject, the members of the group can either spontaneously form or consciously form the group. Buchsbaum, et al. (2017) in the World Bank Group (WBG) research define communities of practice as a group of individuals motivated by the aspiration to cross organizational borders, relate with one another, and build a body of actionable knowledge through coordination and collaboration.

Looking at public service boards, Kisilu and Kinyua (2020) aptly and in consultation with about 98 employees in the Kenyan Makeni county found that, community of practice contributes positively to OP and inadvertently improves service delivery. It is therefore safe to conclude that, community of practice and perhaps institutional social cohesion are cornerstones for satisfactory OP thanks to mutual support among members to produce, hold onto, disseminate, and use knowledge that is pertinent to the organization. The networks that are formed are fostered and strengthened to use learning and information transfer to develop strategic competencies inside the company. Whether these findings are applicable across Kenya or universally is tested through this study which focuses on Kenya’s Kiambu county with the view of contributing to the improvement of livelihoods of communities that since COVID have seen NGO impacts and services trickle down.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author (2024)

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses of this study were;

- H₀: Community of Practice has no significant effect on organizational performance in non-governmental organizations in Kiambu County, Kenya*
- H₁: Community of Practice has a significant effect on organizational performance in non-governmental organizations in Kiambu County, Kenya*

METHODOLOGY

According to Ghauri, and Gronhaug (2010), a research design constitutes the blueprint researchers use for collecting, measuring, and analyzing data with the view to solve the research problem. The objectives of this study also suggest that the research is qualitative in nature. As a result, a descriptive research design is ideal for this purpose. This research designed design has been extensively used in management research (Kinyua, Muathe & Kilika, 2015; Thangaru & Kinyua, 2017; Kinyua & Kinyua, 2023; Murungi & Kinyua, 2024). According to Ghauri, and Gronhaug (2010) a descriptive research design allow the researcher to collect data regarding the beliefs, behavior, attitude, and habits of the target population. Such information was critical in drawing useful conclusions regarding the topic of the study.

The whole set of units and events researchers focus on in a study constitutes the target population. It denotes the homogeneous set of events and units that are of interest to the topic of study (Ghauri, and Gronhaug 2010). The credibility of the findings of studies depends on the proper selection of a target population. The unit of analysis was non-governmental organizations operating in Kiambu County. The target non-governmental organizations are categorized into those that are registered under local trustees while the

others are registered under international trustees. The distribution of the non-governmental organizations that are targeted is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Target Population

Stratum	Frequency (N _i)	Percentage
Registered under Local Trustees	290	90
Registered Under International Trustees	34	10
Total	324	100

Source: NGO Board of Kenya (2023)

In the tabulated distribution, there are 290 and 34 managed under local and international trustees respectively. Therefore, the non-governmental organization managed under local trustees constitutes the majority at 90 percent whereas the rest make a meagre 10 percent. The unit of observation consisted of program managers in each of the 234 non-governmental organizations translating to a population of 324 subjects.

Ghuri, and Gronhaug (2010) define sampling design as the rules and procedures used to include some elements of a population in a study. In this study, proportionate stratified sampling and simple random sampling was used successively to select the sample. Proportionate stratified sampling was used to aid in attaining a fair representation of the sample size from the two strata. The researcher established the sample size based on Yamane's (1967) formula as shown below;

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

Where; n = Sample size,

N = Population size

e = level of precision

Given that N=324 and e = 0.05, n was;

$$n = \frac{324}{1 + 324(0.05)^2}$$

Sample Size (n) n = 179

Therefore the sampling factor (P) = n/N = 179/324 = 0.55

The exact distribution of the sample in the population strata was presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of the Sample

Stratum	Frequency (N _i)	P	Sample Size (n P*N _i)	Percentage
Registered under Local Trustees	290	0.55	160	90
Registered Under International Trustees	34	0.55	19	10
Total	324		179	100

Source: Author (2023)

In the tabulated distribution, there are 160 and 19 managed under local and international trustees respectively. This implies that the non-governmental organization managed under local trustees constituted the majority at 90 percent whereas the rest made up 10 percent of the sample size. The non-governmental organization that was involved in the study was ultimately selected using simple random sampling.

Structured questionnaires were used to help in collecting quantitative information from the closed-ended questions that informed responses to the research questions. The researcher used a Five-Point-Likert Scale was used. The researcher designed open and close-ended questions in these questionnaires. Here the researchers sought to use close-ended questions to control demographic information provided by the respondents. The purpose of the Likert Scale was to measure the close-ended questions linked to the study objectives.

Furthermore, this study sought to use primary data which gave the researcher a higher level of control over the way information is collected. It also assures the collection of distinct behavioural factors concerning knowledge transfer and the non-governmental organizations in Kiambu County, Kenya's performance. As a result, the researcher got the chance to enhance the comprehensiveness and clarity of the behavioural issues influencing knowledge transfer concerning the performance of non-governmental organizations in Kiambu County, Kenya.

The researcher assessed the elements measured to ensure clarity and precision. To do this, the researcher used constructive validity test. Ghauri, and Gronhaug, (2010) explain that constructive validity test helps researchers in ensuring that the data collected represents an accurate measure and reflects the meanings conceptualized theoretically. With this technique, the researcher was able to ascertain the degree to which the findings measured by the instruments reflect what the researcher intends to measure. The researcher also sought advice from the experts including those in the School of Business to certify that the instrument used to collect data has face validity.

Reliability is the extent to which the findings of a research are consistent with studies done previously on similar topics. It measures the stability of the test scores. Ghauri, and Gronhaug, (2010) define reliability as the ability of the findings of research to be replicable. It is therefore the technique of assessing the quality of the procedures followed in conducting research. The researcher used Cronbach's alpha coefficient which has values between 1 and 0. Values lower than 0.5 indicated that the study is not reliable. Values above 0.7 showed the test of reliability in the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

There were 179 questionnaires administered in which 138 were completed and send back to the researcher. This resulted into a 77.1% response rates which was adequate for statistical analysis. This concurs with Ghauri and Gronhaug (2010) who asserts that a rate of response that exceeds 70% in academic research is adequate for undertaking a statistical analysis.

Descriptive Statistics for Community of Practice

Community of practice entails a structured knowledge-sharing environment that facilitates the transfer of expertise and tacit knowledge among members, leading to enhanced organizational performance through improved problem-solving, innovation, and skill development. In this study, the community of practice was described by five statements that represents various indicators represented by outcomes are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Statements on Community of Practice

Statements	Frequency	Mean	Std. Dev.
Employees have access to training sessions that help them integrate acquired lessons into their daily work routines	138	1.783	1.092
Seeking insights from comparable or preceding initiatives is an integral aspect of practices at work	138	3.891	0.701
Process for documentation lessons is frequently enhanced and updated	138	1.558	0.989
Classifying lessons learned is a regular process	138	4.058	0.681
Searching for lessons learned is a regular practice in the departments	138	4.130	0.743
Community of Practice	138	3.084	0.841

Source: Research Data (2024)

The coded opinions obtained from respondents on various extents of agreement with different statements describing indicators community of practice are used to compute central measures of tendency such as mean scores and standard deviations. From the findings in Table 3, a composite mean of 3.084 showed that the respondents moderately agreed with statements describing community of practice while a composite standard deviation of 0.841 showed that the mean scores of the statements were not far from each other.

Specifically, the highest mean score was 4.130 for statement that searching for lessons learned is a regular practice in the departments whose standard deviation was 0.743. This implies that most of the opinions were that there was a regular practice for searching lessons learnt among the departments of NGOs. The least mean score was 1.558 for statement that process for documentation learnt lessons is frequently enhanced which implied little extent agreement among the participants. The findings agree with Kalanzo (2016) who found that, communities of practice are essential in organizational learning given the critical role they play in promoting knowledge sharing among members and their propensity to steer organizations towards a human-sensitive work environment which promotes social cohesion and capacity building amongst its staff.

Generally, there were agreement to a large extent among the respondents that classifying lessons learned is a regular process and that seeking insights from comparable or preceding initiatives is an integral aspect of practices at work. However, there were cases with little extent agreement regarding the employees having access to training sessions that help them integrate acquired lessons into their daily work routines. The findings are in line with Kisilu and Kinyua (2020) who found that, community of practice contributes positively to OP and inadvertently improves service delivery. It is therefore safe to conclude that, community of practice and perhaps institutional social cohesion are cornerstones for satisfactory OP thanks to mutual support among members to produce, hold onto, disseminate, and use knowledge that is pertinent to the organization. The findings agree with resource-based view according to Ahmed, Khuwaja, Brohi, Othman and Bin, (2018) which asserts that internal managerial resources both drive and limit the expansion that any single firm can undertake.

Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Performance

Organizational performance entails the set of interventions, personnel composition and ethos which helps organizations attain their goals with optimized results. In this study, the organizational performance was measured in terms of employees’ satisfaction, lead time, effectiveness and efficiency as described by various statements highlighted in Table 4.

Table 4: Statements Regarding Organizational Performance

	Frequency	Mean	Std. Dev.
Community of practice has resulted to the improvement of operational processes	138	4.029	0.615
Community of practice and applications of existing knowledges affect the performances	138	4.159	0.631
Community of practice have led to employees being more productive	138	3.812	0.760
Community of practice makes management staff being more innovative	138	4.058	0.692
Community of practice has led to managers making better decisions	138	3.971	0.693
community of practice has led to enhanced learning by employees in NGO	138	2.152	0.854
Community of practice has resulted into enhanced teamwork	138	3.790	0.699
Community of practice has led to overall improved performance of departments	138	4.232	0.583
Organizational performance	138	3.775	0.691

Source: Research Data (2024)

The conceptualization of the organizational performance was represented by various statements as tabulated in Table 4. As per the results, the composite mean was 3.775 which implies that there were

agreements to a great extent with most of the statements describing the aspects of organizational performance. The findings on mean scores indicated that there was an agreement to a great extent that that community of practice has led to overall improved performance of departments (Mean=4.232), that community of practice and applications of existing knowledges affect the performances (Mean=4.159) and that community of practice has led managers being more innovative (Mean=4.058). These findings implied that community of practice has led to overall improved performance of departments through innovation. The findings concur with Ferreira, Carvalho and Teixeira, (2017) who are of the view that an organization's progress is predicated on factors which contribute to results it achieves in pursuit of its set objectives.

Regression Analysis

The study conducted a linear regression to establish the effect of community of practice on organizational performance of NGOs in Kiambu County. The study results are represented in Table 5, 6 and 7.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.873 ^a	.761	.754	.139

a. Predictor: (Constant), Community of Practice

Source: Research Data (2024)

As per the study results in Table 5, the R was 0.873 which implies that there is a strong relationship between community of practice and organizational performance of NGOs in Kiambu County. In addition, the R-square was 0.761 which shows that 76.1% of the variations in organizational performance of NGOs in Kiambu County could be linked to community of practice.

Table 6: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.151	4	2.038	106.131	.000 ^b
	Residual	2.554	133	.019		
Total		10.705	137			

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

b. Predictor: (Constant), Community of Practice

Source: Research Data (2024)

As per the study results in Table 6, the F was 106.131 and the sig. values was 0.000. Since the F was greater the F from tables (2.44) and sig. value was did not exceed 0.05, then the regression model was deemed to be significant. This implies that community of practice could be used to predict the organizational performance of NGOs in Kiambu County.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		β	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.240	.240		5.168	.000
	Community of Practice	.691	.054	.534	12.796	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Source: Research Data (2024)

The regression equation was;

$$\text{Organizational Performance} = 1.240 + 0.691 \text{ Community of Practice}$$

The study sought to assess the effect of community of practice on NGOs' performance in Kiambu County, Kenya. From the study results in Table 7, the study established that changing community of practice by 1 unit leads to a positive change in organizational performance in NGOs working in Kiambu County by a value of 0.691. Since the p-values (0.000) did not exceed 0.05, it was concluded that community of practice significantly affects the organizational performance in NGOs working in Kiambu County. The findings agree with Kalanzo (2016) who found that, communities of practice are essential in organizational learning given the critical role they play in promoting knowledge sharing among members and their propensity to steer organizations towards a human-sensitive work environment which promotes social cohesion and capacity building amongst its staff. The findings agree with resource-based view which asserts that internal managerial resources both drive and limit the expansion that any single firm can undertake.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, community of practice was assessed in terms of members' satisfaction, members' participation, knowledge exchange and employee Engagement. Regarding the dependent variable, performance was conceptualized in terms of employees' satisfaction, lead time, effectiveness and efficiency. The study concluded that community of practice significantly affects the organizational performance in NGOs working in Kiambu County. Searching for lessons learned is a regular practice in the departments and seeking insights from comparable or preceding initiatives is an integral aspect of practices at work.

The study recommends that management of non-governmental organizations in Kiambu county should ensure that there is training for its employees in regard to incorporating lessons learned into normal work practices. There is also need for management of NGOs in Kiambu county regularly improve and update the process of documenting lessons learned among the employees. The study also recommended that there is need for NGOs in Kiambu county to create online communities where stakeholders, including beneficiaries, volunteers, donors, and partners, can connect, share experiences, and exchange knowledge.

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