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**INFLUENCE OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT ON PERCEIVED  
ORGANIZATION SUPPORT AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF  
IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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**Abstract**

*Universities are faced with crucial issues of dealing with the perception that staff have regarding support they get from their employers. Academic staffs perceive that universities are reluctant in supporting them in achieving their goals. The criteria used by universities in supporting staff may not be clear, this discourages competent staff reducing their commitment and hence decline in performance. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of perceived organization support among academic staff in public universities in Kenya. The study was supported by organizational support theory and the social exchange theory. It was guided by pragmatism philosophy and used descriptive survey research design. The target population was 5957 academic staff in public*

universities in Kenya. A sample of 374 academic staff was selected for the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from academic staff and interview guide from Administration Registrars. Likert scale was used to examine how strongly subjects agree or disagree with statements on a 5 point scale. Stratified random sampling was used to select respondents. A pilot study on their use was conducted to establish their validity. Data was analyzed by use of content analysis for qualitative data and through multiple regression and Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation analysis for quantitative information and is presented in tables and figures. The results of the study indicate that there was positive and significant influence of staff development on perceived organization support among academic staff in public universities in Kenya ( $r=0.608^{**}$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). This means the relationship between staff development and POS was positive, strong and statistically significant. The study is relevant to the management of universities, academic staffs, the public and the Government. It will contribute to knowledge and assist for further research.

**Key words:** Staff development, perceived organization support, organization support theory, employee wellbeing, public universities

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## 1.1 Background of the Study

The employees are a vital part of any business work environment (Markos & Shridevi, 2010). They generate the revenues needed for organizations to remain profitable and competitive, therefore, organizations need to understand how the workers perceive support provided by them (Riggle, Solomon & Artis, 2015). Eisenberger (1986) defined perceived organization support as employees in an organization form global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. When relationships between staff and organization conform to norms of reciprocity and when patterns of exchange are perceived as fair, workers are more likely to believe that they will not be exploited (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011).

This study was supported by organizational support theory (OST), which state that employees develop a general perception concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. OST holds that the formation of POS is encouraged by employees' tendency to assign the organization humanlike characteristics. This theory is significant this study as it is the basis upon which POS stands.

There is therefore need for organizations to play a major role in supporting staffs' career development. For staff development to be enhanced it calls for universities to embrace transformative leadership, which allows innovation and technology if we have to achieve sustainable development. Due to high demand for higher education shown by the high student enrollment academic staff needs to be encouraged through support from universities to reciprocate in return and institutions to train human resources in various fields who will enable the country realize Kenya Vision 2030.

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework

### Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory was proposed by Schutz (1961) and developed extensively by Becker (1964) and the theory says that the knowledge and skill a worker has generate a certain stock of productive capital. This approach sees staff not as an expense item on their income statements, rather as an asset capable of not only adding value to their organizations but also in some cases ensuring its very survival in the current competitive environment. According to Torrington (2011) human capital shows the combined intelligence and experience of employees as a source of competitive advantage that cannot be imitated by competitors. This theory has effects for attracting,



Christin, 2013). A 2013 national survey of older workers found that 9 percent of those over 50 said they believed they had been denied access to training or the chance to acquire new skills because of their age. Many older workers also believe they cannot afford to pay for further education or they expect to return to the labor market quickly. Time spent in training programs would interfere with their job search and availability for work (Eyster, *et al.* 2013).

In their study, Tahir, Yousafzai, Jan and Hashim (2014) report that, there is a statistically significant relationship, between training and POS and productivity. In their study, however, Rashid, Asad and Ashraf (2011) report that there was insignificant relationship between POS and training and career development. Training and development are firms' attractiveness because they serve as an additional lever for enhancing POS (Shilpa, 2013). Employees will make a comparison of training received and higher expectation from other firms and if they are satisfied with the training and development in a company they will continue working for the company for a long period. This leads to the concept of social exchange theory which is the comparison level (Zainol, Hussin & Othman, 2016). Besides meeting their physiological needs, employees also have a desire to extend their potential and develop their capabilities in firms, or in other words, to satisfy their needs for growth and self-actualization. To create employee beliefs in higher POS is through providing them developmental opportunities that would meet their needs for personal growth (Krishnan & Sheela, 2012).

Promotion opportunities refer to the degree a worker perceives his/her chances to grow and be promoted within the organization. Workers expect to work in positions that provide them with opportunities for promotion to new and challenging positions. According to Dockel (2003) staff should not only be rewarded financially but they should be provided with chances to grow within the organization. Promotion offers opportunities for advancement and is also one of Herzberg's motivators which can be used to enhance high perceived organization support. Employees who feel stagnated in their positions generally are demoralized and will not stay in unrewarding positions. Staffs who are promoted, have their pay increased, high status and their esteem is high, which results in increased job satisfaction unlike staff who stagnates in the same position (Ngethe, 2013).

Promotion systems and procedures should be seen to be fair, clear and objective thereby mitigating the negative feelings of employees who are not promoted (Kipkebut, 2010). In any organization where there is frequent promotional moves and where promotional arrangements cause problems, it is advisable to have a promotional policy and procedure which is known by both the management and employees and which should be adhered to always. Promotion policy and guidelines are crucial in all organizations as it states organizations' intentions to promote from within whenever appropriate so as to satisfy the requirements for high quality staff. However, it should be noted that there are occasions when current and future organizational needs can only be met by recruiting from outside sources. In such cases internal staffs are advised to apply (Armstrong, 2010).

Staffs who are career minded consider career growth and development as a crucial deciding factor in their decision to remain in the organization. Where growth is not guaranteed, employees' perception for support declines. When employees have an opportunity to be promoted they tend to build their career life in the organization as their POS is enhanced (Armstrong, 2008). According to Kipkebut (2010) promotion for academic staff is dependent on teaching, research and publications. However due to financial constraints, non-prioritization of research by the government and inadequate publishing facilities, publishing of refereed articles has become a monumental challenge for Kenya and other third world academics.

According to Tettey (2006) promotional procedures in African universities are long, stressful and cumbersome while requirements are unreasonable and indicate that academics are frustrated by the inconsistencies and rigidity in the application of the promotional criteria. In a study conducted in Nigerian higher education institutions it was

reported that it is not merely the lack of promotion itself which was seen as a problem by academics but also the criteria on which it was based (Mallan, 1994). A study by Waswa, *et al.* (2008) noted that other than inconsistencies in promotions criteria, another challenge in public universities is how to de-link promotion from establishments and availability of funds given by the exchequer that this ends up denying deserving persons their rightful upward mobility. There is a significant relationship between promotions and promotion opportunities with POS among academic staff in public universities in Kenya.

In their research Arshadi *et al.* (2013) suggest that providing potential career opportunities such as promotions may imply a high level of concern for employees and the recognition of their contributions by the organization. This is supported by Eisenberger *et al.* (2014) who also held that opportunities for recognition and promotion have positive associations with POS. Promotion is achieved when an a member of staff is given higher responsibility and makes an upward shift within organizational hierarchy (Asvir, Ahmad & Fatima, 2012). Promotion provides opportunity for personal growth gives more responsibilities and increases social status (Saekoo, 2011). Satisfaction at the place of work is experienced by employees who perceive opportunities for promotion are fair (Alam, Sameena & Puja, 2012). Promotion therefore can be reciprocated as an important achievement in life as it promises and delivers more pay, responsibility, authority, independence and status.

Past research has provided some evidence that staff development opportunities offered by the organization may enhance POS beliefs. For example, Shore *et al.* (2012) concluded that training provided by the organization is a predictor of POS. They found that development experiences and promotions both have significant positive influence on staffs' perceptions of firms' support. In addition, Bilgina and Demirerb (2012) also report a positive relationship between staff development and perceived support from the organization. Following the above study, it is predicted that to the extent that an employee believes that the organization provides opportunities for career development, he or she will have a higher level of POS. In their research Mudor and Tookson (2011) held that the organizational support provided by public universities towards staff development programmes for academic staff had a positive relationship with academic staff performance. These results tally with those of Hung and Wong (2007) who also confirmed the significance of organization support for career advancement in enhancing employee performance and retention.

If organizations were to employ HR practices to show support for staff, these staffs would show commitment in their job performance. Employees who perceive that the organization is supporting them will reciprocate and perform better in their jobs (Klassen, Usher & Bong, 2010). Despite all of the considerations in which promotions are said to have an effect on staff careers and compensation, generally little attention has been paid to the importance of promotion as a determinant of perceived organization support.

### **1.5 Statement of Problem**

Employees are not getting enough support from universities for their development despite the fact that the Government advises and makes recommendations on matters relating to education, training and development of staff (GOK, 2012). Academic staff have developed low perception organization support due to withdrawal of support programmes such as fees subsidy, continuous programmes, not supporting their staff to attend conferences and poor criteria for promotion (Masum, Azad & Beh, 2015). This has led academic to staff being demoralized and have a feeling of not belonging to their organizations. If employees are not satisfied with the exchange relationship, perceive that their support is not equal to return, it may influence them break off the relationship with organization (Somchit, 2015). Inability of staff to get support for training and development brings negative consequences for both the individual staff and the organization (Kumari & Selvi, 2016; Gitahi, Maina & Koima, 2015). With regard to the existing problem of perceived organization support and the gap left by

the authors this study therefore investigated the influence of staff development among academic staff in public universities in Kenya.

## **1.6 Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of the study was to establish the determinants of perceived organization support among academic staff in public universities in Kenya.

### **1.6.1 Objective of the study**

The specific objective of the study was to determine the influence of staff development on perceived organization support among academic staff in public universities in Kenya.

### **1.6.2 Research Questions**

What is the influence of staff development perceived organization support among public universities in Kenya?

### **1.6.3 Research Hypotheses**

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between staff development and perceived organization support among academic staff in public universities in Kenya.

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

### **1.7.1 Design of the Study**

This research applied the pragmatism philosophy which allows methodological mixes that can help researchers answer questions in a better way. A descriptive survey design was used in the study. The variables considered for the study were centred on training and promotions as the indicators among academic staff development.

### **1.7.2 Population of the Study**

Population in this study is the larger group from which the sample is taken. The population of the study was comprised of all the academic staff members in public universities in Kenya. For this study, target population comprised all the 5957 academic staff from the selected universities as provided by the Commission for University Education (CUE). This was necessitated as a result of some universities withdrawing support programmes such as fees subsidies and expenditure for staffs attending conferences (Masum, Azad & Beh, 2015).

### **1.7.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

A sample in this study is a portion of the population of interest. According to Kombo and Tromp (2009) a sample is a collection of units, chosen from the universe to represent it. Before collecting data, it is imperative to determine the sample size requirements of a study (Ngumi, 2013). The purpose of sampling is to secure a representative group which will enable the researcher to gain information about a population from which it is drawn (Ngethe, 2013).

In carrying out this study probabilistic sampling was adopted. This is to imply that all the members of the population were to stand a chance of being selected (Panneerselvan, 2007). Sampling was done in two stages where in the first stage purposive sampling was used where all the old seven universities were picked first. The researcher then selected from each of the five regions selected for the study, a university to represent the region, which must be a smaller or younger university.

Simple random sampling was used to select the academic staff in which case each of them had an equal chance of being selected. This technique minimized the fear that certain groups (academic staff) within the population may be under-represented. This gave all objects an equal chance of being included in the sample.

To get the final estimate (n) a formula by Yamane (1967) is used:

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

Where;

n=desired sample size

N = the target population

e=error margin (0.05)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Therefore, } n &= \frac{5957}{1 + 5957(0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{5957}{15.89} \end{aligned}$$

n= 374.

Where,

Target population=5957(staff from the 12 universities selected to represent a total of 31 universities).

#### **1.7.4 Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument used in this study to gather the data was the questionnaire whose items were prepared on the basis of their theoretical studies. All the components were measured on a five-point likert scale ranging from 5 to 1. A five-point scale was used (5= Strongly agree, 4= Agree, 3= Moderately agree, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly disagree). At the end of the questionnaire the author placed open ended questions.

The questionnaire is designed to address specific objective or test hypothesis (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2010). The use of questionnaire is applied by other studies (Kamau & Muathe, 2016; Shusha, 2013; Tumwesigye, 2010; and Bahrami, *et al.*, 2013). A questionnaire having both closed ended and open-ended questions was administered to the academic staff members who participated in the study. In Section A of the questionnaire, open ended questions were used to elicit the respondent and organization background.

An interview was also conducted for each selected universities. A total of eight Registrars accepted to be interviewed. Face to face interview was conducted where the Registrars in charge of Administration in the sampled public universities were interviewed because they deal with staff issues and are the custodians of staff records. Interviews are used to solicit information from officers who may not have time to fill questionnaires.

#### **1.7.5 Method of Data Collection**

The researcher obtained an introduction letter from the university and a research permit from the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST). Permission to collect data was sought from the selected 12 public universities. This was followed by recruitment of research assistants for each of the universities selected. The researcher and the research assistants used drop and pick method in the data collection. The respondents were given a maximum of a week within which to fill the questionnaires before collection. This method was appropriate considering the length of the questionnaire, the availability of the respondents and the geographical dispersion of the sample selected. An interview guide was used to get data from senior administrators who were busy and who were required to provide in depth information and also clarifying some information.

### 1.7.8 Method of Data Analysis

Relevant inferential statistics such as multiple regression analysis were done to test hypotheses advanced for the study. Regression analyses was conducted to investigate the significance and direction of the relationships between the variables. Correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the extent of significant association between the variables in the study. This study also used qualitative research which adopts an interpretive approach to data, studies things within their context and considers the subjective meanings that people bring to their situation. Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis a procedure for categorization of data for the purpose of classifying, summarizing and tabulation to supplement the inferential statistics results. Data was summarized thematically, to capture all the views, be re-coded to be given numerical significance, and then was analyzed quantitatively. Those that could not be given numerical values were narrated. The verbal opinion of the respondents (the Registrars) on the relationship between study variables as obtained during the interview were important in adding credence to the quantitative results determined by the statistics. The researcher gave the respondent's verbatim views and compared them with the statistical results as per the objectives. This analysis has been used in studies (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008; Sunday, 2010).

### 1.8 Results

The study sought to investigate the influence of staff development on perceived organization support among academic staff in public universities in Kenya. Staff development was operationalized by use of two indicators (training and promotions), with ten questionnaire items as developed by Liu, (2004). A five point likert scale was developed based on (5= Strongly agree, 4= Agree, 3= Moderately agree, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly disagree). The findings were presented as shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Summary Table for Staff Development Items**

	5	4	3	2	1	MR	SD
My University facilitates specialized training to academic staff.	39(12%)	111(34%)	97(30%)	38(12%)	37(12%)	3.23	1.16
My University facilitates my attendance to workshops, seminars and conferences	17(5%)	68(21%)	108(34%)	70(22%)	59(18%)	2.73	1.14
My organization has a working policy that supports staff training and development.	49(15%)	102(32%)	98(30%)	48(15%)	25(8%)	3.31	1.13
My organization ensures that I maximize my training potential.	23(7%)	60(19%)	146(45%)	63(20%)	30(9%)	2.94	1.02
My organization provides me with opportunity to achieve my training goals.	23(7%)	84(26%)	122(38%)	72(22%)	21(7%)	3.04	1.015
My organization gives priority for promotion to internal staff.	29(9%)	89(28%)	103(32%)	72(22%)	29(9%)	3.05	1.10
My organization provides me with opportunities to grow from within.	19(6%)	93(29%)	107(33%)	75(23%)	28(9%)	3.00	1.05
I am satisfied with the timely promotions of staff in my	11(3%)	57(18%)	81(25%)	102(32%)	71(22%)	2.48	1.11



University.							
Promotion of academic staff is based on their performance.	28(9%)	73(23%)	103(32%)	64(20%)	54(17%)	2.86	1.19
My supervisor is ready to recommend me for promotion in case a vacancy arises.	58(18%)	95(30%)	86(27%)	49(15%)	34(11%)	3.29	1.22

From the results, most of the respondents 46.5% agreed that there was provision for specialized training for the academic staff, while 23.3% disagreed that there was specialized training offered. However, 30.1% of the respondents did not agree or disagree. 26.6% of the respondents agreed that universities facilitated their attendance to workshops and seminars while 40% disagree that there was such provision. 33.5% do not agree or disagree. There was agreement of 46.9% of the respondents that the universities had working policies on staff development, 22.7% disagreed while 30.4% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Whether they are given priorities during promotions, 36.6% agree, 31.4% disagree and 32.0% could not agree or disagree. 34.8% of the respondents agree that they are given opportunity to grow from within the organization, 32% disagreed while 33.2% neither agreed nor disagreed. The results also indicate that 53.7% of the respondents disagreed that there were timely promotions of staff, 21.4% agree while 25.2% did not agree or disagree. Also, 47.5% of respondents agree that their supervisors were ready to recommend them for promotions, 25.8% did not agree while 26.7% did not agree or disagree.

Specialized training returned a mean rank of 3.2 and a standard deviation of 1.16. This indicates that a majority agreed fairly that specialized training influenced staff development. Variability of responses was low signifying overall agreement. The lowest mean rank observed for staff development was related to timely promotions of staff (2.48) and a standard deviation of 1.1. This means staff promotion was not being conducted in a timely manner hence dissatisfaction promotion activities.

**1.8.1 Discussions and Analysis**

**Influence of Staff Development on Perceived Organization Support**

To test the effects of independent variable (staff development) on the dependent variable (perceived organization support), a regression analysis was conducted. In relation to results from correlation Table 1.2, it was found that staff development has a positive and significant influence on perceived organization support ( $r=0.608^{**}$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Nonetheless, to establish the predictive ability of the factor, staff development was regressed on perceived organization support and the results obtained presented in Table 1.2 & 1.3.

**Table 1.2: Staff Development on Perceived Organization Support**

Model Summary								
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					R Square Change	F Change	Sig. Change	F
1	.608 <sup>a</sup>	.370	.368	6.226	.370	187.596	.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), staff development

The findings in the Table 1.2 shows the amount of variation on the predicted variable (perceived organization support) as explained by the predictor variable (staff development). The regression analysis yielded a correlation coefficient value of 0.608 and  $R^2 = 0.370$ . This means that 37% per cent of the corresponding variation in the predicted variable (perceived organization support) could be predicted by staff development. The rest could possibly be explained by other variables not in this model. In addition, the results in same Table 1.2 gave the F test value of 187.596,  $p=0.000$  which was large enough to support the goodness of fit of the model in explaining the variation in perceived organization support. This confirms the usefulness of the predictor variable (staff development) on perceived organization support.

Similarly, the findings of the regression analysis (Table 1.3) revealed that there was a significant positive influence of staff development ( $\beta=0.576$ ,  $t= 13.69$ ) on perceived organization support. It implies that a unit increase in staff development yields a 0.576 increase in perceived organizational support (Equation1). That is employees who express high levels of satisfaction with the staff development programs provided will also exhibit a positively strong level of perceived organization support. These findings are supported by Bingham (2015) who opines that when employees are exposed to staff development opportunities, it will help them to develop and achieve their potential for individual growth, then, they will exhibit high levels of perceived organization support. These was corroborated by Darder, Jusoh and Rasli (2012) who found out that there is a positive relationship between staff development construct of training which creates a sense of organization support. Consistently, Tahir, Yousafzai, Jan and Hashim (2014) research study on the impact of training and development on employee productivity, had also established that staff development programs are positively related to perceived organization support. This is further supported by Khoury and McNally (2016) in their study whose findings indicate that there is need for organizations to prioritize staff development funding to fulfil the needs at the workplace. In their study, Tzabbar, Tzafir and Baruch (2017) report that employees should be supported to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities. However, Alam and Waseef (2016) report that university teachers are comparatively less concerned with payment and promotions for them to perceive they are getting support from the employer.

**Table 1.3: Unstandardized Coefficients of Staff Development**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	11.930	1.308		9.121	.000
	Staff development	.576	.042	.608	13.697	.000
a. Dependent Variable: perceived organization support						

Estimated regression Equation for Staff Development

$$Y = 11.930 + 0.576SD \tag{1}$$

Since the t-value is greater than +1.96, the regression model obtained in Table 1.3 is confirmed to be significant and applicable. The study therefore rejects the null hypothesis that; H01: Staff Development has no significant influence on perceived organization support among the academic staff in public universities in Kenya.

## **1.9 Conclusions**

Based on the findings it was concluded that staff development is a critical determinant to perceived organizational support and that the relationship between the two variables was positive and significant. The findings led to the conclusion that training offered to staff was inadequate. This is as a result unfavourable training policies which favoured partiality in its implementation. It was also concluded that academic staff were not adequately supported to attend workshops, seminars and conferences to enhance professional competence. In terms of staff internal promotions, it was concluded that staff were not being given opportunity to grow from within. This has greatly impacted negatively on hard working staff, resulting to serious dissatisfaction as they do not know when they will be promoted and hence, feel they are not being supported by their universities, some have stuck in same grades for years.

### **1.9.1 Recommendations**

Firstly, Universities should revise their policies on the financial support to assist staff attend seminars, conferences and workshops both locally and internationally to ensure best practices kept in their profession. Secondly, it is also recommended that these policies be well communicated to their staff in regard to internal and external appointments, which should be fair and equitable to all staff.

### **1.9.2 Significance of the Study**

The findings will encourage managers of public universities in Kenya to focus more on giving support to their members of staff as their employers. This study contributes to the knowledge concerning the various determinants of organizational support, such as staff development, reward management, work life balance and work environment. The study validates such determinants of perceived organizational support in the Kenyan public universities' context. Similarly, this study contributes to the existing knowledge on the topic of factors of perceived organization support in Kenya.

### **1.9.3 Limitation of the Study**

The study was carried out in public universities Kenya because staff development is a crucial issue that have been raised in various studies. Only the thirty one fully fledged universities were included in this study. The constituent colleges were not included in the study as they had not acquired full university status. The study was to address the determinants of perceived organization support of full-time academic staff. The part-time academic staff were not included in the study as they may not be affected by the above issue.

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