



Effect of Compensation System on Employee Engagement in Fairtrade Horticultural Firms in Kenya

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Abstract

While most people understand that engaged employees are often happier and more satisfied in their job, the main reason that engagement is now a focal point is because it leads to real business results. Emotional states are hard to understand and measure. Employees are becoming key business drivers for any organization. The objective of the study was to determine the effect of compensation system on employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya. A cross-sectional descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study targeted 17 fairtrade horticultural firms as unit of analysis and 5,600 employees as the unit of observation. The sample size was 373 respondents drawn from low level, middle level, and top-level management. The study relied mainly on primary data. The study adopted stratified and simple random sampling techniques. After the stratification of the respondents into strata, simple random sampling was adopted to pick up the respondents. The researcher used questionnaire as the research instrument. Descriptive and inferential analysis were computed using SPSS

version 26. In order to analyze the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable the study used Regression analysis at 5% level of significance. The findings indicated that compensation system has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya. The study concluded that compensation system contributes significantly to the employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya. From the results, the study recommended the need for horticultural firm to strengthen their compensation system aspects. In particular, the firms should develop better compensation systems since they offer an incentive for personnel training and development which enhances efficiency within the firm.

Keywords: Compensation System, Employee Engagement, Extrinsic Incentive system, Fairtrade, Horticultural Firms

Introduction

The process of fostering an environment of employee engagement is critical to organizational success and will thus help to retain talent, create customer loyalty, and lead to improved company performance and shareholder value (Albrecht, Bocks, Dalton, Lorigan & Smith, 2021). Aspects of employee engagement include being engaged, those who are unengaged, and those who are actively disengaged (Arifin, Nirwanto & Manan, 2019). According to Tian and Robertson (2019), workers that want to do something great in the workplace are dedicated to their role, less likely to leave the company, more productive, give better customer service and in turn create greater profits in the organization.

Engaged workers stand apart from those not engaged and actively disengaged counterparts because of the discretionary effort they consistently bring to their roles. These employees willingly go the extra mile, work with passion, and feel a profound connection to their company (Ahakwa, Yang, Tackie & Atingabili, 2021). They are the people who will drive innovation and move the business forward and therefore increasing engagement should be a strategic priority (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). Building a constituency of engaged employees should be a priority. Engagement starts with each person and is subjective, therefore having the feedback that they are respected as individuals at work can have a significant impact on how employees view their overall lives (Arzamasova & Esaulova, 2021). Azmy (2019)), argues that engagement is about how we create the conditions in which employees offer more of their capability and potential.

In this regard every organization view human resources as very important (Ababneh, 2021). The employees that work in an organization determine the failure or success of the organization. For an organization to

function smoothly and survive in the era of globalization and great competition, they should ensure that the workforce they engage in the organization is reliable. According to Adhitama and Riyanto (2020), the engagement and motivation of employees need to be boosted by organizations so that organizations can improve their performance.

Raza, Farrukh, Iqbal, Farhan and Wu (2021) argued that employee engagement encompasses high levels of employee commitment and involvement towards the achievement of the organizational goals. Engaged employees' value, enjoy, and have pride in their work. There have been wide reports on how organizational outcomes which include; performance increase, effectiveness in the organization, the satisfaction of customers, the satisfaction of employees, productivity, and staff turnover that is reduced have a positive relationship with engagement (Nasidi, Makera, Kamaruddeen & Jemaku, 2019).

According to Sari and Ranihusna (2019), the overwhelming majority of companies fail to address their company's working environment, which therefore hurts the overall performance of their workers. They claim that the workplace includes ensuring the security of employees, keeping their jobs, fostering cooperation and effective communication, and encouraging competence and active involvement in decision-making. Firms observed that workers' perceived importance leads to heightened dedication and a feeling of work ownership. While many influences within the working environment including salaries, working hours, the degree of autonomy workers are granted, and the organizational structure of the workplace are all different, they each have the potential to impact employee happiness (Hameduddin, 2021). This research is interested in discovering how employee incentive and engagement interact with the work environment in the Horticultural industry in Kenya.

The words used by Ariussanto, Tarigan, Sitepu and Singh (2020) express that the concept of perception is an instance of a process of awareness of an object. One of the methods of knowing is a construct created by joining together the perceptions and their content. In his investigation, he found that workers' impression has a major impact on the workplace quality and may significantly affect employee retention (Judeh, 2021). Workplace conditions are likely to improve when workers see their work, their job, and their relationships in the workplace as favorable. Firms with a negative image in the market place may find competent workers resigning to choose other jobs.

Chakraborty and Ganguly (2019) recognized employee engagement in performance terms i.e. employee engagement is employee's willingness and ability to contribute to company success by freely giving the extra effort on an ongoing basis. Duque, Pereira, Santos and António (2020) pointed out

that knowing the level of employees' engagement within the organization is the foundation for change and its success. The internal efficiencies and savings of organizations are a result of the positive relationship that exists between engagement and performance.

However, employee engagement cannot succeed without incentives. Incentives are external motivational approaches used by organizations to reward employees who work with high spirits to assist the organization achieve its goals. Motivation is important because it encourages workers to be noticed and rewarded for their contributions. Workers need to be motivated by an incentive structure to perform at a high level (Rasool, Wang, Saeed & Iqbal, 2021).

The nature of incentives can be differentiated into different categories, depending on their function. For instance, rewards which help to encourage certain behaviors are classified as positive incentives, such as offering financial bonuses to employees if they meet a defined level of competency. Alternatively, punishments which alter people's behavior are described as negative incentives, such as threatening employees by withholding privileges, such as reductions in their salary. Lastly, additional compensation is considered a concrete incentive, including encouraging cash bonuses, commissions, periodic promotions, motivational advancements, and profit sharing with bonuses, among other things. This approach to incentives has also been applauded for stimulating employee engagement and, thus, a reward system should be established that is attuned to the requirements of the workforce (Albrecht, Lorigan & Smith, 2021).

In most organizations, reward is now focused on improving engagement levels and motivating employees (Welmilla & Ranasinghe, 2020). Every worker needs to feel appreciated due to their efforts in the work they do and working for long hours (Suomi, Kallio & Tevameri, 2021). What they receive as payment, need to correlate with the efforts they offer in their jobs. While the expectations of earlier generations were quite straightforward, nowadays individuals are looking for employment that satisfies them and compensates them fairly (Atik, Indrayani, Khaddafi & Windayati, 2023).

The value proposition that an employee is offered in terms of rewards is called total rewards (Turner & Turner, 2020). The value that an employer has on the work done by the employees and gives it as a reward package which includes all the jobs done and the total hours they worked is called total rewards (Hossen, Chan & Hasan, 2020). Proper reward and recognition systems help with the linkage of performance. Motivation is derived either from financial rewards or non-financial rewards or both (Kim & Kim, 2021). A good rewarding system can motivate employees to engage in organizational activities properly (Bhardwaj, Mishra & Jain, 2021).

The attractiveness and fulfillment of work are shown through the total rewards that employees are offered by their employers (Biriowu & Ofurum, 2020). The people are the ones mostly emphasized here. Every employee wants to work for an organization that identifies their best talent, provides them with a compelling future, promotes their growth, and offers a good working environment and good total pay. Being given time to attend classes and being offered free lunches are not part of the total pay. It also includes having work that is interesting and exciting, good colleagues, and effective leaders (Nasir & Irfan, 2023).

Before even Kenya gained independence when it was under the British economy, it was known for its capability in exporting fresh horticultural produce to other countries where Kenya was supposed to contribute to East Africa's budget (Kariuki, 2021). Kenya began exporting fresh horticultural produce to even Europe after independence and the business flourished (Mwangi, 2019). The GDP in Kenya is contributed largely by agriculture in Kenya (Kogo, Kumar & Koech, 2021). From the total export in Kenya, 65% is usually agricultural products to other countries, which is one-third of its produce (Chacha, Kirui & Wiedemann, 2024).

The major reason why Kenya is appropriate for the growth of flowers was; a labor force that is cheap and well-educated, climate conditions that are favorable and being able to enter into big markets such as Europe (Moore & Hanson, 2022). The industry was boosted through the knowledge gained and capital that attracted it (Chomba & Nyang'au, 2019). In Kenya, the fastest segment growing is the Cut-Flower Industry. It provides the country with an annual turnover of 600 Million Dollars being the largest export industry. Globally, Kenya stands at fifth position in the export of flowers. The flowers in Kenya are largely exported to Netherlands, Germany, and the U.K. Many advantages are accruing from the flower export industry in Kenya, which has led to the growth and development of the economy (Opondo, 2019).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The management of the Horticultural sector in Kenya has established incentive programs; these include promotion, training, career development, and work flexibility in search of improving employee work motivation to guarantee prompt and excellent service. However, employee work motivation is still low despite the existence of incentive programs (Chepoghisho, 2019). The horticultural industry has witnessed negative publicity on poor human resource management practices, working conditions resulting in a disgruntled labor force (Chepoghisho, 2019). This brings out an aspect of disengaged employees, which has far-reaching consequences in

an industry that is labor-intensive compromising the benefits an organization could reap through labor efficiencies (Al Zeer, Ajouz & Salahat, 2023).

According to ILO (2022), agricultural labor productivity in Kenya has been on the decline for the last three decades due to disengaged employees among other factors. A study by the Fairtrade Foundation reported an average absenteeism rate of 10% in Kenyan flower farms. This is a potential indicator of disengagement (Fairtrade Flower Report, 2023). National statistics indicate a high employee turnover rate of 20.7% among horticultural firms in Kenya. This suggests potential disengagement issues across various flower firms in Kenya. (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). According to a report by Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) (2020), the cut flower industry has been accused of overworking workers beyond the mandatory eight hours per day. Employees are required to work for 46 hours per five-day week, which is eight hours from Monday to Friday and five hours on Saturday (GoK, 2023). Yet, Kaaria (2022) carried out in Kenya, observes that workers in the cut flower industry were engaged even for more than ten hours per day sometimes going for shifts of up to 15 hours a day without a break, especially during the annual peak seasons such as valentine day and mothers' day. In July 2010 more than 1,500 workers from Aquilla and Karuturi farms went on strike over poor working conditions and meagre wages, the strike being the third in less than two weeks (Muindi, 2020). Accordingly, the study endeavor to establish whether or not workers in the cut flower industry are engaged in the farm within the legislated eight hours per day as per the Constitution of Kenya (2010).

Employee engagement has been studied many times. Within the study conducted by Hussain, Khaliq, Nisar, Kamboh, and Ali (2019), these workers were seen to perform better if they were compensated, recognized, and dealt with stress on the job when the employer was regarded as supportive of their well-being. Using reward and performance data from five Litoral manufacturing firms, Ngwa et al. (2019) found that profit-sharing in manufacturing companies had a substantial good influence on employee commitment, whereas flat-rate systems had a major negative effect, and collective bargaining incentive systems had a significant beneficial impact on staff cohesion in manufacturing firms. Employee performance was the main concern in the research, but employee engagement was not. A case study was conducted among commercial banks in Noakhali Region, Bangladesh on employee performance and the results found out that employee performance is influenced by reward (Jeni, Mutsuddi & Das, 2020). Further, the study revealed that cash bonus does not affect employee performance. From the studies, it is evident that compensation systems contribute immensely to employee motivation, performance, productivity, and commitment. This study thus sought to better understand the role of

compensation systems on employee engagement in the Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya by testing the following null hypothesis:

H₀₁ There is no significant influence of compensation system on employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Victor Vroom, (1964) was responsible for proposing the expectancy theory as cited by Okonkwo (2023). This theory emphasizes the efforts that individuals make in their specific processes where they are supposed to make sure the goals set are achieved effectively. Motivation is determined through three important elements that are considered by Victor Vroom. Valence is the first element. Valence is the importance that the individual places upon the expected outcome. For the valence to be positive, the person must prefer attaining the outcome to not attaining it. For example, if someone is mainly motivated by money, he or she might not value offers of additional time off. The fact that one can have the belief that they can attain a certain level of performance, which helps them achieve the desired goal which is called instrumentality as the second element. Expectancy is the third element which involves a person combining both efforts and performance where there are efforts made, then good performance is automatically expected. How a certain goal can be attained and how that goal attracts individuals is what determines their motivation.

According to this theory, an employee is supposed to be offered a reward according to their efforts as this motivates their level of valence which results to good performance (Mwaruta, 2022). The performance of an employee's effort is what determines their level of motivation and the will to achieve goals (Nnko, 2022). The efforts made by individuals according to this theory determine their level of motivation which in turn results in the person achieving their personal goals. Performance has strong relationships with efforts; rewards and personal goals where these three controls an individual's behavior (Nnko, 2022). The rewards that employees receive determine their level of motivation and attractiveness to the goal that is meant to be achieved as predicted by the Expectancy Theory (Gachui, 2022). The work that employees do is done more effectively when they are promised valued rewards in their organizations. The three aspects of the Expectation Theory (employee expectancy, instrumentality, and valence) are used to analyze an organization's performance.

The performance and the motivation of employees and the organization are explained through the Expectancy theory of motivation. The performance of an employee's effort is what determines their level of

motivation and the will to achieve goals (Patricia & Asoba, 2021). The efforts made by individuals according to this theory determine their level of motivation which in turn results in the person achieving their personal goals. Performance has strong relationships with efforts; rewards and personal goals where these three control an individual's behaviors (Patricia & Asoba, 2021). The rewards that employees received determine their level of motivation and attractiveness to the goal that is meant to be achieved as predicted by the Expectancy Theory (Kamau & Nyang'au, 2019). The work that employees do is done more effectively when they are promised valued rewards in their organizations. Employee's expectancy, instrumentality and valence which are the three dimensions of the Expectancy Theory, are used in determining the performance of the organization (Hassan, Sarwar, Adil & Gillani, 2020). This theory is used in this study to indicate the effect of compensation system on employee engagement in the Horticultural sector in Kenya.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The researcher's framework helps them organize their study, and it is a collection of concepts (Mensah, Agyemang, Acquah, Babah & Dontoh, 2020). The hypothesized relationship between independent variable and dependent variable is summarized in figure 1.

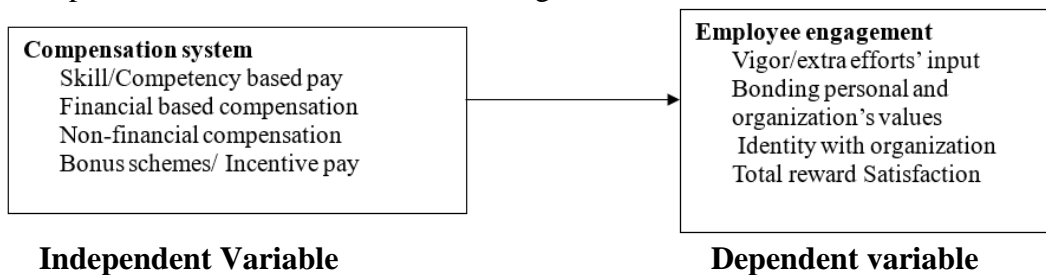


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.3 Empirical Literature

Wiyanto, Akbar and Dharmawan (2023) studied the effect of organizational culture and compensation on employee engagement. The finding research shows there are positive direct effect among organizational culture to employee engagement, compensation to employee engagement, organizational culture to compensation and positive indirect effect of organizational culture to employee engagement through the mediating role of compensation. The implications of the research is of utmost importance for PT Lim Siang Huat facing high voluntary turn over and high absenteeism rate in recent times. Jeha, Knio and Bellos (2022) created a conceptual framework based on five theories in order to investigate how does a reward system affect the level of engagement and motivation at local

nongovernmental organizations. The findings revealed that gratuity plays a significant and positive role in the engagement and motivation of the employees and is recommended by all the interviewees as a tool for improving the performance and sustained competitiveness, especially in terms of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

According to Pranitasari, Trianah and Nuriandini (2019) showed that compensation has a coefficient of 0.184. This means that compensation is a weak effect to employee engagement. The coefficient of working environment in this research is 0.607, which means that working environment has strong effect to employee engagement. Simultaneously, both compensation and working environment has a coefficient of 0.542. This means that both variables has relatively strong effect on employee engagement. Hendriks, Burger and Commandeur (2023), found out that employee engagement is generally unaffected by CEO (over)compensation. However, negative effects emerge under specific conditions. First, employee engagement declines with negative media coverage about CEO compensation. Second, employee engagement declines with greater CEO (over)compensation in the financial sector, which is a sector with extraordinary levels of CEO compensation and compensation controversies. The findings suggest that a ceiling effect exists, at which point negative effects emerge and employee engagement becomes relevant in determining CEO compensation policies, while the general insensitivity of employee engagement to CEO compensation can help explain the soaring CEO compensation levels.

Sudiro, Adi and Fakhri (2021) indicated that Employee Spirituality fully moderated (Pure moderator) between Compensation fairness and Employee Engagement and between Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement. Moreover, Employee Spirituality partially moderated between Job Involvement and Employee Engagement. The research suggests to implement the model in a narrow scope and considers many variables outside the Compensation fairness, Job Involvement, and Organizational Commitment. Ferine, Risdwiyanto, Nurfauzi and Kraugusteeliana (2023) revealed that compensation has a significant and positive effect on employee engagement because a higher salary increases employee engagement. Employee engagement has a significant and positive effect on employee performance because the employee pays more attention to the company; their performance will improve. Payment, on the other hand, has no significant impact on employee performance because low pay does not cause employees to perform poorly.

Robianto and Masdupi (2020) sought to determine the effect of career development, compensation, work environment and satisfaction on work engagement in the Employees of the City Government of Bukittinggi. This

type of research is explanatory. The results of this study career development, compensation, work environment and satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on work engagement in the Employees of the City Government of Bukittinggi. Maisoni, Yasri and Abror (2019) showed that Compensation and leadership had a significant and positive effect on the employee engagement of Coca-cola Amatil Indonesia Central Sumatra. Rahmayani, Hetami and Aransyah (2021) showed that the competence variable partially had a significant effect on employee engagement, the compensation variable partially had a significant effect on employee engagement, the competence variable partially had a significant effect on employee performance, the compensation variable partially had a significant effect on employee performance, the employee engagement variable partially had an effect significant to employee performance.

Christianto (2021) aimed to analyze the magnitude of the effect of employee compensation on employee engagement at PT Indonesia Power Suralaya Power Generation Unit. The results showed that servant leadership and employee compensation affected job satisfaction by 64.9%, while employee engagement was influenced by 86.8%. This direct effect shows that servant leadership has no effect on employee engagement, employee compensation has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement, servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction, employee compensation has no effect on employee job satisfaction, and employee job satisfaction has a positive effect. and significant to employee engagement. Hemasih, Eliyin, Rayuwati and Yustisar (2022) sought to determine whether supervision, leadership, and compensation simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on employee engagement at PT Prima Mas Indonesia. The data analysis technique used is the associative method with the help of the SPSS version 16.0 program. This study uses multiple linear regression analysis. The sample in this study was 42 respondents. Primary data collection using a questionnaire. The results showed that Compensation partially has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement at PT Prima Mas Indonesia. Supervision, leadership, and compensation simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on employee engagement at PT Prima Mas Indonesia.

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design:

In this study, a cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. This was founded on the basis that the study involves various horticultural firms in Nakuru County. More so, cross-sectional studies are carried out at a specific point in time or over a short period of time. This research adopted pragmatism research philosophy which is premised on a reasonable and

logical way of doing things or of thinking about problems that is based on dealing with specific situations instead of on ideas and theories.

3.2 Population and Sampling Techniques

The population for this study was all cadres of employees (21,030 employees) of the Horticultural firms in Kenya registered with Fairtrade Africa (17 Fairtrade horticultural firms). The target population of this study was the low –level, middle level, and top-level management staff. To scientifically calculate the sample size, A representative sample size with 95% confidence and risk levels were selected, based on the work of Yamane (1967) formula. The formula used is illustrated below;

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

Where

n = sample size; N = Target population; e = Proportion of the study

The 5,600 is the target population and therefore, (N = 5,600). A 95% confidence level is deemed acceptable and thus statistically $z = 2$. Placing information in the above formula at a 95% confidence level and an error limit of 5% results in:

$$n = \frac{5,600}{1 + 5,600 (0.050)^2}$$

= 373 respondents

Therefore, 373 respondents were the lowest acceptable number of responses to maintain a 95% confidence level and a 5% error level. A proportionate sample size of approximate 373 respondents was the unit of observation which is 5% precision of the population was selected using a stratified sampling technique from the identified study sample size of the population. After the stratification of the respondents in the cadres (low level, middle level and top management) and simple random sampling techniques was adopted to pick up the respondents. This is as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Size

S/NO	Category	Target Population	Sample size
1	Low-level Management	3,200	213
2	Middle level Management	1,480	99
3	Top level Management	920	61
	Total	5,600	373

Source: Fair Trade (2020)

3.3 Instrumentation

The study relied mainly on primary data. The researcher used questionnaire as the research instrument. The research also undertook desk

review of existing information about the study areas and collect qualitative data through in-depth interview from respondents who are conversant with the subject through various interactions or experiences. A self-administered structured questionnaire was dropped to each respondent and picked later. The questionnaire consisted of both open ended and closed ended questions and were divided into two parts covering demographic variables and study variables. Out of 373 administered questionnaires, 315 questionnaires were successfully filled and handed back to the researcher which gives 84.4% response rate.

The pilot testing involved administering the structured questionnaires on a few respondents working with Desire Flora horticultural firm in Kajiado County. The participants in this study were 10% of the sample size, that is, 37 respondents. The filled questionnaires underwent both reliability and validity tests. Instrument's reliability was tested through Cronbach's Alpha (α). The Cronbach alpha ranged from 0.930 for employee engagement to 0.947 for compensation. The content validity was achieved through ensuring that each item was appropriate for a particular variable construct through determination calculation of the content validity index. The construct validity was maintained through restricting the items to the conceptualization of the variables and ensuring that the indicator of a particular variable is within the same construct. All the items were retained based on the general rule of thumb for acceptable factor loading of 40%.

3.4 Data Analysis and Presentation

To provide information, the data was processed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques in the context of SPSS 26. Content analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data whereas multiple regression analysis was utilized to analyze the quantitative data by aide of SPSS Software version 26. Analyzed data was presented in form of tables, charts and graphs for ease of comparison and inference. By using Regression analysis at the 5% significance level, the research evaluated the connection between the independent factors and the dependent variable.

4.0 Findings and Discussions

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Variables in the Study

To determine the influence of compensation system on Employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya, the study sought to establish employee engagement in fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya. The results are as shown in Table 2.0.

Table 2.0: Employee Engagement
5- Strongly agree; 4-Agree; 3-Neutral; 2- disagree;1- strongly disagree, S.D-Standard Deviation, N-Sample Size

Employee engagement	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	S.D
1. There is a feeling of vigor in accomplishing job tasks.	45.1%	21.3%	6.7%	16.5%	10.5%	3.74	1.435
2. There is enthusiasm about looking for opportunities to improve the organization's performance	34.9%	32.7%	4.8%	17.5%	10.2%	3.65	1.375
3. There is a strong connection between personal values and organization values	36.5%	27.9%	9.8%	13.3%	12.4%	3.63	1.407
4. There is strong identification with the organization's success and failures	36.2%	30.8%	5.4%	17.5%	10.2%	3.65	1.384
5. There is pride associated with working for the organization	26%	33.3%	20.6%	13%	7%	3.58	1.203
6. Employees keep up to date with any development within their job area/field	31.4%	28.3%	19%	15.2%	6%	3.64	1.237
7. Employees always volunteer to do extra work outside their job tasks to contribute to the organization's success	39.4%	27%	9.5%	15.9%	8.3%	3.73	1.342
Average level of N	Minimum	Maximum	Grand Mean	Std. Dev.			
Employee Engagement	315	1.14	5.00	3.66			1.21

As shown in table 2, 45.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that at their job, they feel strong and vigorous in accomplishing job tasks while 21.3% agreed on the same assertion. On the other hand, 6.7% of the respondents were neutral on the statement that at their job, they feel strong and vigorous in accomplishing job tasks while 16.5% disagreed and 10.5% strongly disagreed. With a mean of 3.74 indicated that the respondents agreed that at their job, they feel strong and vigorous in accomplishing job tasks and a standard deviation of 1.435, indicating a high variation in the responses.

Regarding enthusiasm about looking for opportunities to improve this organization's performance, 34.9% of the respondents strongly agreed and 32.7% agreed on the same statement. Conversely, 4.8% of the respondents

were neutral on the statement, while 17.5% disagreed and 10.2% strongly disagreed. With a mean of 3.65, revealed that the respondents agreed on the statement that there is enthusiasm about looking for opportunities to improve the organization's performance and a standard deviation of 1.375, indicating a high variation in the responses.

The results also revealed that 36.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is a strong connection between personal values and the organization values, while 27.9% agreed on the same assertion. However, 9.8% of the respondents were neutral on the statement, while 13.3% disagreed and 12.4% strongly disagreed. With a mean of 3.63 indicated that the respondents agreed that there is a strong connection between personal values and the organization values and a standard deviation of 1.407, indicating a high variation in the responses.

Further, the results revealed that 36.2% of the respondents strongly identify with this organization's success and failures while 30.8% of the respondents agreed on the same assertion. On the other hand, 5.4 % of the respondents were neutral, 17.5% disagreed while 10.2% strongly disagreed that they strongly identify with this organization's success and failures. With a mean of 3.65, the participants agreed that there is strong identification with the organization's success and failures and a standard deviation of 1.384, indicating a high variation in the responses.

However, 26% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is pride associated with working for the organization and another 33.3% agreed. On the other hand, 20.6% of the total respondents were neutral on the statement, while 13% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed. With a mean of 3.58, the respondents agreed that there is pride associated with working for the organization and a standard deviation of 1.203, indicating a high variation in the responses.

Moreover, 31.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that employees keep up to date with any development within their job area/field and 28.3% agreed on the same assertion. In addition, 19% of the respondents were neutral on the statement that employees keep up to date with any development within their job area/field, while 15.2% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed on the same. With a mean of 3.64, the respondents agreed that employees keep up to date with any development within their job area/field and a standard deviation of 1.237, indicating a high variation in the responses.

Lastly, the results revealed that 39.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that employees always volunteer to do extra work outside their job tasks to contribute to the organization's success, while 27% agreed on the same statement. Moreover, 9.5% of the respondents were neutral on the statement that employees always volunteer to do extra work outside their job

tasks to contribute to the organization's success, 15.9% disagreed while, 8.3% strongly disagreed that employees always volunteer to do extra work outside their job tasks to contribute to the organization's success. With a mean of 3.73 the participants agreed that employees always volunteer to do extra work outside their job tasks to contribute to the organization's success and a standard deviation of 1.342 indicating a high variation in the responses. Apparently, the average level of employee engagement (Grand mean) according to the sampled respondents was at 3.66 with a standard deviation of 1.21. This implies that majority of the respondents agreed with most of the statements that were used to measure employee engagement. However, significant standard deviation shows they were some variations implying that this rate of engagement is not uniform amongst the sampled firms. The report by Setiawan and Negoro (2023) asserts that in order for workers to implement a business plan, they must have the required skills and credentials. With respect to this, however, it is imperative that organizations make good use of their people's skills in the effort to increase employee engagement. Engaged workers are those that want to help the company grow by providing the finest service or excellent work (Andrić, Priyashantha & De Alwis, 2023). Further, Ningsih, Wijaya, Muntahari and Damayanti (2023) analysis on the measures of employee engagement reiterated that an engaged employee; believes in the organization, works actively to make things better, treats others with respect, and helps colleagues to perform more effectively, can be relied upon, and goes beyond the requirements of the job, sees the bigger picture even at personal cost, identifies with the organization, keeps up-to-date with developments in his/her field; and last but not least, looks for, and is given, opportunities to improve organizational performance.

Table 3.0: Compensation system

5- Strongly agree; 4-Agree; 3-Neutral; 2- disagree; 1- strongly disagree, S.D-Standard Deviation, N-Sample Size

Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	S.D
Compensation system							
1. Salaries that match the work done enhances employee engagement	22.5%	38.4%	15.9%	18.7%	4.4%	3.56	1.159
2. Basic pay motivates one to do work well	31.1%	38.7%	1.9%	18.4%	9.8%	3.63	1.349
3. Compensation matches with other organizations' compensation	18.4%	42.5%	16.5%	19%	3.5%	3.53	1.101
4. Increase in basic pay motivates increased performance	16.5%	41.6%	18.4%	22.5%	1%	3.50	1.045
5. Highly competitive pay	18.7%	44.1%	11.4%	22.5%	3.2%	3.53	1.127

makes employees show extra work effort, increasing their engagement								
6. Benefits are so important leading to retention in the organization	10.2%	50.5%	17.8%	18.4%	3.2%	3.46	1.007	
7. The benefits motivate one to do well at work	28.6%	31.4%	16.8%	19.4%	3.8%	3.62	1.195	
8. The recognition system motivates one to work well in their area and even go beyond the call of duty	16.5%	45.1%	15.6%	21%	1.9%	3.53	1.056	
9. One feels adequately compensated for use of their skills in their job	26.7%	35.2%	12.1%	21.3%	4.8%	3.58	1.222	
10. The organization recognizes employees who put in extra effort	15.9%	42.5%	18.4%	19.4%	3.8%	3.47	1.089	
Average level of N			Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Compensation system	315	1.30	5.00	3.54	0.96			

As shown in table 3, 22.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that salaries that match the work done enhances employee engagement while 38.4% agreed on the same assertion. On the other hand, 15.9% of the respondents were neutral on the statement that salaries that match the work done enhances employee engagement while 18.7% disagreed and 4.4% strongly disagreed. With a mean of 3.56 indicated that the respondents fairly agreed that salaries that match the work done enhances employee engagement and a standard deviation of 1.159, indicating a high variation in the responses.

In regard to basic pay motivating one to do work well, 31.1% of the respondents strongly agreed and 38.7% agreed on the same statement. Conversely, 1.9% of the respondents were neutral on the statement, while 18.4% disagreed and 9.8% strongly disagreed. With a mean of 3.63, revealed that the respondents agreed on the statement that basic pay motivates one to do work well, a standard deviation of 1.349 indicating a high variation in the responses.

The results also revealed that 18.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that compensation matches with other organizations' compensation, while 42.5% agreed on the same assertion. However, 16.5% of the respondents were neutral on the statement that compensation matches with other organizations' compensation, while 19% disagreed and 3.5% strongly disagreed. With a mean of 3.53 indicated that the respondents agreed that

compensation matches with other organizations' compensation, and a standard deviation of 1.101 indicating a high variation in the responses.

Further, the results revealed that 16.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that increase in basic pay motivates increased performance, while 41.6% of the respondents agreed on the same assertion. On the other hand, 18.4 % of the respondents were neutral, 22.5% disagreed while 1% strongly disagreed that increase in basic pay motivates increased performance. With a mean of 3.50, the participants fairly agreed that increase in basic pay motivates increased performance and with a standard deviation of 1.045, indicating a high variation in the responses.

However, 18.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that highly competitive pay makes employees show extra work effort, increasing their engagement and another 44.1% agreed. On the other hand, 11.4% of the total respondents were neutral on the statement that highly competitive pay makes employees show extra work effort, increasing their engagement, while 22.5% disagreed and 3.2% strongly disagreed. With a mean of 3.53, the respondents fairly agreed that highly competitive pay makes employees show extra work effort, increasing their engagement and a standard deviation of 1.127, indicating a high variation in the responses.

Moreover, 10.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that benefits are so important leading to retention in the organization and 50.5% agreed on the same assertion. In addition, 17.8% of the respondents were neutral on the statement, while 18.4% disagreed and 3.2% strongly disagreed on the same. With a mean of 3.46, the respondents were a bit neutral that benefits are so important leading to retention in the organization.

According to the findings in the table above, 28.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that benefits motivate one to do well at work while 31.4% agreed on the same. On the other hand, 19.4% of the respondents were neutral on the statement, while 19.4% disagreed and 3.8 strongly disagreed. With a mean of 3.62, the respondents agreed that benefits motivate one to do well at work and a standard deviation of 1.195, indicating a high variation in the responses.

However, 16.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that the recognition system motivates one to work well in their area and even go beyond the call of duty, while 45.1% agreed on the same. Moreover, 15.6% of the respondents were neutral on the statement, while 21% of the respondents disagreed and 1.9 strongly disagreed. With a mean of 3.53, the participants agreed that the recognition system motivates one to work well in their area and even go beyond the call of duty. A standard deviation of 1.056, indicating a high variation in the responses.

The results revealed that, 26.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that one feels adequately compensated for use of their skills in their job,

while 35.2% agreed on the same statement. Conversely, 12.1% of the respondents were neutral, while 21.3% disagreed and another 4.8% strongly disagreed. With a mean of 3.58, the respondents agreed that one feels adequately compensated for use of their skills in their job and a standard deviation of 1.222, indicating a high variation in the responses.

Lastly, the results revealed that 15.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that the organization recognizes employees who put in extra effort, while 42.5% agreed on the same statement. Moreover, 18.4% of the respondents were neutral on the statement, while 19.5% disagreed and another 3.8% strongly disagreed that the organization recognizes employees who put in extra effort. With a mean of 3.47 the participants fairly agreed that the organization recognizes employees who put in extra effort and a mean of 1.089, indicating a high variation in the responses.

Apparently, the average level of compensation system (Grand mean) according to the sampled respondents was at 3.54 with a standard deviation of 0.96. This implies that majority of the respondents agreed with most of the statements that were used to measure compensation system. However, significant standard deviation shows there were some variations implying that the compensation system is not uniform amongst all the sampled firms. Hendriks, Burger and Commandeur (2023) opine that compensation is an integral part in motivating workers for their input in generating innovative ideas that contribute to an organization’s core business functions and thus improving the organization’s financial and non-financial performance. They further argue that a worker will offer their maximum contributions whenever they have a perception that the effort, they put in will be appreciated by their employers. USA based companies are moving towards flexible pay systems aligned strategically with intricate and dynamic business environment (Rahmayani, Hetami & Aransyah, 2021). USA based companies are moving towards flexible pay systems aligned strategically with intricate and dynamic business environment (Rahmayani et al., 2021).

4.2 Linear Regression between Compensation system and Employee Engagement

The study used a Simple Linear Regression between compensation system and employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya by assessing the influence of compensation system on employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya.

Table 4: Model Summary and ANOVA

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	of the
1	.701 ^a	.492	.490		.70666	

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Compensation system
 b. Dependent Variable: Employee engagement

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	151.386	1	151.386	303.152	.000 ^b
	Residual	156.303	313	.499		
	Total	307.689	314			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Compensation system

From the correlation Table 4.0, compensation system is positively correlated to employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya the coefficient is 0.701 (p value < 0.01) this is significant at 99% confidence level. Thus, increase in compensation system would make employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya also to increase. The model (Compensation system) was able to explain 49.2% of the variation in the employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya as indicated by the R Square = 0.492. The findings were as shown in Table 4. where the ANOVA test results were $F(1, 313) = 303.152, P = 0.000 < 0.05$; an indication that the Simple Linear Regression model was a good fit to our dataset.

Table 5: Regression Coefficient

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	®	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	-.629	.266		-2.362	.019
	Compensation system	1.168	.067	.701	17.411	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee engagement

The regression Coefficient results showed that $\beta = 1.168, t = 17.411, p = 0.000 < 0.05$; therefore, compensation system had a statistically significant influence on the Employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya. Compensation system had a positive unstandardized beta coefficient = 1.168 as shown in the coefficients results; this indicates that the employee engagement is predicated to improve by 1.168 units when the Compensation system variable goes up by one unit. To predict the Employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya when given the level of Compensation system, the study suggests the use of the following model.

Employee engagement = -0.629 + 1.168 Compensation system

Same results were obtained by Wiyanto et al. (2023) who studied the effect of organizational culture and compensation on employee engagement. The finding research shows there are positive direct effect among compensation to employee engagement, organizational culture to compensation and positive indirect effect of organizational culture to employee engagement through the mediating role of compensation. Pranitasari et al. (2019) showed that compensation has a coefficient of 0.184. This means that compensation is a weak effect to employee engagement. The coefficient of working environment in this research is 0.607, which means that working environment has strong effect to employee engagement. Simultaneously, both compensation and working environment has a coefficient of 0.542. This means that both variables have relatively strong effect on employee engagement. Ferine et al. (2023) examined the effect of compensation on employee engagement and how it affects employees who work in high-end coffee shops. According to the study's findings, compensation has a significant and positive effect on employee engagement because a higher salary increases employee engagement. Employee engagement has a significant and positive effect on employee performance because the employee pays more attention to the company; their performance will improve.

However, some of the previous studies have not agreed with the study findings. For instance, Manzoor, Wei and Asif (2021) empirically examined the relationship between compensation and employee performance in the non-profit organizations of Pakistan. The study found that compensation have insignificant impact on performance. Compensation such as housing have a weaker impact on employee motivation. There is an indirect relationship between compensation and employee motivation as employees of the organizations are not satisfied with their fringe benefit packages. Ferine et al., (2023) examined the effect of compensation on employee engagement and how it affects employees who work in high-end coffee shops. According to the study's findings, payment, has no significant impact on employee performance because low pay does not cause employees to perform poorly.

Conclusions and Recommendations

By rejecting the null hypothesis, the study concluded that there is significant influence of compensation system on employee engagement in Fairtrade horticultural firms in Kenya. Employee engagement such as vigor/extra efforts' input, bonding personal and organization's values and identity with organization was achieved through skill/competency-based pay, financial based compensation, non-financial compensation, and bonus schemes/ incentive pay. In conclusion, the study's findings offer a

compelling message for stakeholders in the Kenyan Fairtrade horticultural sector. By prioritizing strategic and multifaceted compensation systems that cater to both personal and professional aspirations, organizations can cultivate a workforce brimming with engagement, dedication, and shared purpose. This not only leads to a more rewarding and productive work environment but also strengthens the very foundation of the Fairtrade movement, paving the way for a future where ethical labor practices and employee well-being flourish hand in hand.

Based on the findings, the study recommended the need for horticultural firm to strengthen their compensation system aspects. In particular, the firms should develop better compensation systems since they offer an incentive for personnel training and development which enhances efficiency within the firm. An attractive compensation system also leads to employee motivation which allows for better workforce productivity. Further, attractive compensation system act as an incentive for employee retention which enhances employee engagement. The study recommended the policy makers to formulate policies that would improve compensation systems that could be implemented by existing horticultural firms.

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