

**EXTENT OF INVOLVEMENT OF LINE MANAGERS IN HUMAN  
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS IN THIKA WATER AND  
SEWERAGE COMPANY LIMITED**

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**DECLARATION**

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other University.

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**SUPERVISOR:**

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University supervisor.

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**MR. GEORGE OMONDI**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my immediate family; husband, parents, siblings and my children. They have been my source of inspiration, strength and my motivators throughout the entire period of my study.

And to my husband Samuel Kung'u, thank you for specifically paying for my school fee for this program, thus enabling me to go through the postgraduate program. I therefore dedicate this project to you. This is my blessing to you.

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Special thanks to the Almighty God for giving me the gift of life, wisdom, good health and the strength to complete this program. And to my husband who believed and supported me entirely through this process. I am deeply indebted to you.

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God bless them all.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Line managers keep employees motivated, competent and productive. Since line managers who work with employees from day to day, they play an important role in accomplishing the business strategy of the organization. However, line managers are often occupied with operational, marketing and financial goals and in most cases find it difficult to fulfill their human resource management roles. The objective of the study was to establish the level of involvement of line managers in human resource management functions at the Thika Water and Sewerage Company Limited. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This design was chosen for the study because it enables the description of the current status of a population or phenomenon being studied. The target population comprised of nineteen (19) line managers at the Thika Water and Sewerage Company Limited. Structured questionnaire were used to collect primary data. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and presented using tables and figures. The study found that line managers of Thika Water Sewerage Company are involved in development of policies for recruitment, motivation and reward, selecting candidates by sifting applications, training needs identification, remuneration of staff, communication of strategy and negotiation of pay and benefits. Based on the research findings the study concluded that line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company are involved in various human resource functions including development of policies for recruitment, employee motivation, staff appraisal and reward management. The study recommends that line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company should be involved in the selection of candidates since have a deeper understanding with the staffing needs of their specific lines, training needs identification and also in staff appraisal, determination of employees' rewards and benefits based on performance as they are the only one who understand employees' performance in the organization. The limitation of the study was that it focused on a single firm. The study also encountered unwillingness by respondents to reveal information which was classified as confidential. Further study should be done to establish the level of involvement of line managers in human resource management functions in other organizations.



## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Changing demands in human resource management functions are present throughout literature. Organizations often have to address constant changes in their internal and external business environment. This is critical for the organization to remain competitive need to remain competitive (McConville, 2006). According to Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank, and Ulrich (2012), the transfer of the functions of human resource experts to supervisors is an emerging issue in many organizations today. It is widely agreed that line managers' help in many ways to accomplish the functions of the human resource management departments. Line managers are often charged with human resource related job responsibilities such as employee career development, performance appraisal, recruitment of new employees, salary negotiation and benefits, safety and health and industrial relations (Budhwar & Fadzil, 2000). It is argued since line managers spend most of their time with employees, they are best suited to be more responsive to staff needs.

Boxall and Purcell (2011), line managers' influence employees' attitudes and behavior which are essential to link human resource management with achievement of strategic objectives of the organization. This suggests that line manager's play a much greater role in human resource management roles than previously indicated in literature (Currie & Procter, 2001). Line managers are better positioned to carry out human resource management functions by influencing the direction of teams towards the achievement strategic goals and objectives of the organizational (Townsend, Wilkinson, Allan & Amber, 2012). Line managers influence the way employees act. As a result, employees' attitudes and behavior can be influenced in order to achieve real improvement in organizational performance (Whittaker & Marchington,

2003). Unfortunately, in many organizations, the functions of line managers are often unclear in terms of scope and depth of the human resource management tasks they should carry out.

This study will be informed by the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory (Boxall & Purcell, 2003) which opines on the line managers' capability and motivation to influence their performance of human resource management roles and responsibilities. The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory will be operationalized for effective implementation of human resource management policies by line managers. The study is also founded on the self-determination and enhancement theory which depicts that line managers are responsible for motivating subordinates in addition to developing an environment in which they work effectively.

Thika Water and Sewerage Company was first established as a Water project in 1950. It was registered as an independent company in the year 2009 in order to provide water and sewerage services in Thika region. Since its inception, the company has established a brand name in the distribution of safe and quality drinking water and sewerage services in the region. The company has lot of investment on empowering line managers but lack of information on level of involvement of line managers in human resource management functions as well as human resource department inefficiencies due to lack of ownership as well as indecisions among line manager.

### **1.1.1 Concept of Involvement**

Involvement refers to the process of directly engaging employees to help an organization's fulfill its mission and meet its operational and strategies objectives and goals.

Involvement of employees requires that their expertise and ideas are used in solving problems and making decisions in the organization. Involvement in its simple definition refers to allowing employees to decide how they will perform their work. It is the process of involving employees in making suggestions for performance improvement, planning, goal setting and performance monitoring (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003).

Employee involvement in this study is defined by Kulik and Bainbridge (2006) as the process of engaging line managers on human resource decisions making. It constitutes a concerted effort by human resource managers to find ways in which to engage line managers in staff management by investing in human capital. Involvement is based on the assumption that employees directly involved in a process always know it best. In addition, Gould-Williams (2007) argues that employee involvement motivates employees to improve individual and group performance.

### **1.1.2 Line Management**

Line managers are a type of managers to whom individual employees directly report to. Line managers on the other hand report to higher level managers on behalf of the employees and teams they are responsible for (Renwick, 2003). A line manager is a manager whose work directly affects the core business activity of an organization. Honey (2006) defines a line manager as a manager who directs the work of individual employees and is directly responsible for the achievement of organizational objectives. The line manager obtains results through teams in the organization. The line manager's level of accountability is higher in comparison to that of subordinates'. He or she is accountable to senior management in the organization the work done by individual employees.

Line managers are answerable to higher level managers in the management hierarchy of the organization (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003). However, line managers are placed in the lower

ranks of the management hierarchy. In most cases, employees who report to line managers often have no managerial or supervisory roles in the organization. The traditional roles of line managers include providing technical expertise, managing operational costs, measuring operational performance, monitoring work processes, planning work allocation and dealing with customers or clients (Dalziel& Strange, 2007).

Hutchinson and Purcell (2003) also argue that one of the critical people management role played by line managers is absence management. This task involves conducting back-to-work interviews, monitoring absence, phoning or visiting absent employees at home, conducting disciplinary hearings and counseling staff. Other people management responsibilities include coaching and development, discipline and grievances, involvement and communication and performance appraisal. In addition to people management, the human resource role of line managers also includes recruitment and selection. As a result, many of the responsibilities carried out by human resource managers are those that were initially performed by personnel or human resource departments (Armstrong, 2006).

### **1.1.3 Human Resource Management Functions**

In many organizations, the human resource function enables the organization to achieve its operational and strategic objectives and goals by supporting employees (Renwick, 2003). The main aim of the human resource function is to implement strategies and practices that directly affect employees'. They also ensure harmonious relationship between senior management of the organization and the workforce.

The human resource function plays a critical role in establishing an environment that ensures that employees make the best use of their knowledge and skills for the benefit of the organization (Brandl et al., 2009).

Armstrong (2006) argues that human resource functions are directly involved with people management and development in an organization. The goal of human resource management is to match employees' knowledge and skills to achieve operational and strategic goals of the organization. This ensures that people resources are optimally used to achieve the business strategy of the organization. The human resource function is concerned with recruitment and selection of highly skilled staff and also ensuring that such employees are retained and promoted according to the organizational culture and human resource policy (Reilly et al., 2007).

Human resource management is directly involved in the development and implementation of policies and practices that affect all the employees in an organization. They include organizational strategies for knowledge management, people management, talent management, recruitment and selection, employee welfare, equal opportunity, health and safety, human resource administration and statutory requirements management (Armstrong, 2008). Armstrong (2008) continues to argue that human resource management is mainly concerned with recruitment and selection, performance management, human resource planning, training and development, reward management and employee relations.

Human resource strategies within an organization are meant to address all the issues that concern the well-being of employees within the organization. They are specifically meant to ensure that issues that employees have with the senior management of the organization are effectively addressed and that a harmonious relationship between the two groups is achieved and maintained. Human resource management therefore plays a critical role in ensuring that

employees are provided with an environment where they can make the best use of their knowledge and skills for the improvement of organizational performance (Sims, 2000). As a result, human resource management enables an organization to achieve its operational and strategic goals by initiating strategies that support the welfare of employees (Wilkinson, 2001).

#### **1.1.4 Thika Water and Sewerage Company**

The company was registered in 2009 to provide water and sewerage services to Thika town and its environs. Since its inception, the company has grown and established a brand as a reputable organization. It has established a strong brand in the provision of safe and quality drinking water as well as provision of reliable sewerage services in the region (2015/2016 strategic plan).

It is important to note that Thika Water and Sewerage Company was established as a Water project in 1950. It was however given its mandate in 1956 and operated as a department within the Municipal Council of Thika and covered an area of approximately 93 km<sup>2</sup>. However on 7th September 2009 the department started operating as an independent Company under Athi Water Services Board. In July 2009, the company was incorporated and increased its coverage to approximately 254 km<sup>2</sup>. The vision of Thika Water and Sewerage Company is to be the leading company in providing of safe, reliable and affordable water and sewerage services to the residents of Thika town and its environs. Its Mission Statement is to provide excellent water and sewerage services to residents of Thika town and its environs in a consistent and to the absolute satisfaction of esteemed customers all year round (2015/2016 strategic plan).

## **1.2 Research Problem**

It has been widely noted from literature that line managers have an important responsibility of ensuring that employees are competent, productive and motivated. Line managers are always in contact with employees (Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006). They listen to employees problems, spend time with them, challenge them and perform appraisal for their work. As a result, line managers are better positioned to know the needs of employee's needs. It therefore makes sense to involve line managers in making managerial decisions that directly affect employees (Wright & Nishii, 2006). However, many line managers are focused on marketing, operational, and financial targets, and often are unable to fulfill their personnel management roles (Andersen, Cooper & Zhu, 2007). Line managers lack the necessary skills, knowledge and tools to be effective people manager. In most cases, line managers escalate people related issues to the human resource department or sometimes ignore the existence of such problems. According to Bud war (2000), literature provides an insufficient picture of the functions of line managers in relation to human resource management.

The Thika Water and Sewerage Company Ltd like other public organizations in Kenya is faced with issues concerning line manager's involvement in the human resource management functions. This is mainly due to lack of an enabling environment and facilities that do not support the modern technology, human resource department inefficiencies as well as indecisions among line manager demonstrated by low pay that is not commensurate with line manager's qualification due to the low demand for their new skills and higher qualifications, lack of exposure and mentorship and non-involvement in decision making. Over the years Thika Water and Sewerage Company has been faced with high staff turnover rates and an institutional culture that lacked line manager indecisiveness in organizational human resource initiatives as a priority thereby hampering organization performance on provision of safe and affordable water and sewerage services to Thika town and its environs.

Local studies on the human resource management functions of line managers include Njau (2012) who did a study on challenges facing human resource management function at Kenyatta National Hospital and Bulinda (2009) that looked at the factors that influence line manager's perception of managerial performance in public universities in Kenya. The previous studies reviewed looked at the role of line managers in human resource management functions and did not consider direct on the extent of involvement of line managers in human resource management functions. Furthermore, one of the studies was conducted in a developed economy such as the United Kingdom which focused on generalization of the private sector. Based on this, the results may yield different outcomes and therefore the findings may not apply in the current context because none of the previous researchers has studied the extent of involvement of line managers in human resource management functions in Thika Water and Sewerage Company Limited. These gaps in knowledge thus necessitated the proposed study which seeks to answer the question: What is the extent of involvement of line managers in human resource management functions in Thika Water and Sewerage Company Limited?

### **1.3 Objective of Study**

To establish the extent of involvement of line managers in human resource management functions in Thika Water and Sewerage Company Limited.

### **1.4 Value of Study**

The research study will be valuable to the management of Thika Water and Sewerage Company Limited, this research will be useful since it will add in strategic decision making on role and responsibility of line managers in human resource function and also help the management to focus on achievement of organizational goal managers. To the line managers who are employees of Thika Water and Sewerage Company Limited it will be the end user of



the research which will benefit from the findings on their role in human resource function because it will add on their knowledge on human resource function and be able to understand better the need for involvement in implementing human resource function.

To the government, the findings will also assist government policy makers' gain vital understanding of how strategies need to be formulated and implemented at the same time. The study is useful to the human resource policy makers in crafting strategies in line managers in human resource management functions aimed at mitigating the challenges facing the organization. To the human resource professionals this study will bring out benefit of involving line managers in human resource function by increasing their effectiveness. It will be able to show challenges facing extent of involvement of line managers in human resource function and therefore they could be better equipped for implementation of their human resource role.

To academicians and researchers, this report will add knowledge on role and responsibilities of line managers in human resource management. Academicians and researcher may use the findings of the study as reference as well as a source of secondary data while conducting research within the same field, identify the research gap and eventually venture into further research. The findings of this research will act as a stepping stone to researchers who may wish to study further into the area of engagement of line managers in human resource management functions

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the theoretical foundation, functions of human resource management and the extent of involvement in human resource management functions undertaken by line managers.

### **2.2 Theoretical Foundation**

This section of the research study focuses on the human resource management theories on which the current study is anchored. It specifically looks at the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory and the self-determination and enhancement theory.

#### **2.2.1 Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Theory**

The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory (Boxall & Purcell, 2003) is a widely used performance research theory in human resource management research. It determines the human resource management practices to be used. The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory suggests that individual performance depends on the ability of employees to perform the tasks assigned, their level of motivation to perform the tasks and whether the opportunity to perform the tasks is provided to them. According to Gerhart (2005), human resource management practices and policies directly impact on employees abilities to perform their duties by influencing employees' motivation and therefore contribute to organizational performance.

In this study we apply the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory differently: instead of determining employee behavior and attitudes as proposed in applied human resource management practices, we use line managers' ability, motivation and opportunity to determine their human resource management performance and therefore operationalize the

Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory for the effective implementation of human resource management functions by line managers. Ability-Motivation-Opportunity suggests that line managers' performance is directly related to their ability to apply human resource management practices, motivation and whether the opportunity is made available.

Hailey et al (2005) argue that line manager' knowledge, skills and talents in human resource management practices are inadequate due to insufficient training. Line managers often lack human resource management competence for especially agreed practices, legal and statutory requirements as well as have limited personnel management skills. They implement human resource management practices based on their 'common sense'. In addition, line managers are not able to adequately deal with issues concerning employees (Harris et al., 2002). Regarding the effect of any Ability-Motivation-Opportunity factor on human resource management implementation effectiveness, human resource management managers seem to overestimate the effect of opportunities the human resource management department can provide, such as sufficient time for human resource management instead of operational responsibilities and support from human resource management professionals. Opportunities alone cannot enhance line managers' human resource implementation skills. However, opportunities positively impact on line managers' capabilities in the form of human resource management-related competences on human resource management implementation effectiveness. Human resource management professionals have an important role to play in improving and facilitating the competences line managers to perform human resource management practices well.

### **2.2.2 Self-Determination and Enhancement Theory**

Literature separates employee motivation and organizational motivation as critical for line managers to implement human resource management functions. Another important theory

which differentiates between personal and organizational incentives is the self-determination theory (Deci, Ryan & Soler, 1985). The theory uses human behavior as the basis for identifying different types of motivation. It lists motivation from high to low levels. The theory also recognizes and distinguishes intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and motivated behavior. Individuals that are intrinsically motivated are able to undertake tasks by without external motivation. They often do the tasks to derive pleasure or self-satisfaction. On the other hand, extrinsically motivate individuals are propelled to perform tasks by external forces. The external force may take the form of a reward or a goal. Motivated behavior is comprises the least level of self-determination. Motivated individuals have no sense of purpose, have no drive to change the direction of events and have no expectations in form of rewards (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). In addition, for line managers to perform human resource functions, they must first perceive that such tasks will add value to themselves and their teams. Armstrong (2008) argued that perceived value addition is a critical determinant of whether line managers will undertake human resource management functions or not.

In accordance with the theory of self-enhancement, “people have a general tendency to develop positive and enhanced self-evaluations”, which results in an overly-positive perception of one own capabilities and performance (Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006). This implies that the variables measuring the self-evaluation of one’s own capabilities and performance are overestimated; for this study these variables are perceived competences and human resource management implementation effectiveness perceived by line managers.

## **2.3 Human Resource Management Functions**

Human resource management function is a set of activities that collectively enable manage workforce in an organization. Derived from the overall human resource mission, the human resource management functions include the following:

### **2.3.1 Human Resource Planning**

Human resource planning is a step by step and continuous process where the human resource needs of an organization are determined with the goal of establishing long term plans to address the changing conditions in the external and internal labor market. It is considered as a critical task in budgeting and corporate planning. Human resources costs significantly affect the organizations budget. In addition, human resource forecasts influence strategic plans of the organization. Aosa (2006) argues that local and global competition is influencing organizations to adopt strategies that are customer-focused and adaptable in order to succeed. Strategic personnel planning, employee retention and career development are emerging issues in human resource management today.

Whittaker and Marchington (2003), concept of human resource planning involves analyzing, forecasting, planning and utility. At the analysis phase, the external labor market is scanned and the internal plans changes to reflect the conditions in the external environment. The forecasting phase is a projection of future human resource requirements based on an audit of the potential labor supply from the internal and external environment. The planning process is concerned with developing policies and practices based on the forecasts developed. Human resource planning involves planning for recruitment and selection, training and development, rewards as well as absence control. Lastly, utilization process is carried out to compare the human resource policies and practices with and critical measures of success such as product quality and customer satisfaction (Akangoa, 2014).

### **2.3.2 Employee Recruitment and Selection**

Recruitment is a human resource function which involves finding the right candidates for accomplishing various tasks within the organization. On the other hand, selection is the process of picking or choosing the right applicants or candidates to fill the various positions within the organization. The process of recruitment and selection consists of four major phases. The first phase is requirements definition where job roles and person specifications are prepared. The terms and conditions for which selected candidates will adhere to are also established at this point. The second phase in the recruitment and selection process is advertising the recruitment. The third phase is attracting the right candidates by evaluating and reviewing the applications made by candidates. The final phase of the recruitment and selection process is selecting the candidates with the right qualifications and experience to fill the positions advertised. This is done by sifting all applications and interviewing candidate before employment letters are offered (Armstrong, 2006).

Hodgetts and Hegar (2008) note that recruitment and selection of personnel is one of the global human resource challenges facing organizations across industries. Global companies are finding that pre-employment screenings are critical. Human resource experts involved in recruitment and selection are increasingly finding it difficult to select the appropriate candidates in a global environment. The line managers are therefore best placed in recruitment of new employees based on staffing gaps in their departments

### **2.3.3 Training and Development**

For any organization to operate effectively, individuals involved in the business must learn to perform the functions of their current jobs at a high level of proficiency. An effective organization however requires, that it has available within itself a pool of individuals who are

qualified to accept increasing responsibilities to move into other higher level jobs with reasonable facility (Harney & Jordan, 2008).

The main components of human resource development strategies include effective sourcing, employee development, employee motivation and retaining of highly skilled employees in the organization. In addition, human resource development requires regular identification and improvement of employees' skills, regular job analysis in relation to organizational operational and strategic objectives.

Human resource management also involves regular reviewing of routine tasks with the view to integrate modern technology. In addition, human resource management includes employees' performance management and identification and improvement of key skills in particular employees. Other tasks include training needs analysis and career development. The human resource function is entrusted with the responsibility of assessing the current performance of employees and providing opportunities for enhancement of skills and through training and promotions (Wright & Nishii, 2006).

#### **2.3.4 Performance Management**

Andersen, Cooper and Zhu (2007) advocate that performance management is a comprehensive approach to ensuring that operational and strategic goals of the organization are achieved through employee performance improvement. Performance management focuses on the contribution of individual employees and teams towards the organizational performance. The goal of performance management is to ensure that performance is sustained in the long run. Effective performance management is characterized by the ability of the performance management system to communicate the business strategy. In addition, it should provide project management functions for all employees and have the ability to measure performance in real time. Effective performance management should link individual

performance with organizational performance. According to Purcell and Kinnie (2007), individual commitment towards performance is an emotional contract which is critical for organizations to meet their expected targets. Performance assessment experts insist that emotional contracting is a critical part of human resource processes.

Performance management is a subject which causes controversy especially aspects related to appraisals, performance and salaries. Kulik and Bainbridge (2006) point out that employee in many organizations are often not satisfied with methods of performance management used by managers to evaluate their level of performance. As a result, many employees are often reluctant to participate in the process. According to Kulik and Bainbridge (2006), a positive attitude and behavior by managers and employees is necessary to improve the evaluation process. However, they argue that careful attention should be given to the performance measurement criteria used as this is often unclear.

Fletcher (2001) argues that performance management has become an integral part of human resource management and is often used to integrate human resource functions with the business strategies of the organization. However, Armstrong and Baron (1998) describe the major challenge faced by human resource specialists as the decision over which criteria to use when evaluating performance. The method used to classify average, good and indifferent employees is a major point for debate among human resource researchers. Price (2007) points out the fact that despite several research having been carried out on performance management, there are few practical recommendations on how to design and implement effective appraisal systems that can results in substantial performance improvement among employees. Price (2007) argues that most researchers have focused on performance measurement criteria and neglected the management aspect of the process.



### **2.3.5 Reward Management**

Reward management is the process of formulating and implementing policies and practices that ensure that employees are compensated and rewarded according to their contribution to the organization. Reward management is meant to ensure that employees are rewarded fairly, equitable and in a consistent manner. It focuses on the design, implementation and sustainability of reward systems which addresses the needs of various stakeholders in the organization. Armstrong (2009), reward is an essential component of the relationship between employers and employees. In addition, salaries and payment is a major concern of the human resource management. However, the issue has always remained controversial and one of the most sensitive at both theoretical level and practical settings. Compensation is the reason for working in a given organization. It represents the remuneration in exchange for the work done by the employee (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). Remuneration influences the ability of an organization to attract, recruit and retain top talent in the organization (Budhwar, 2000). Compensation may either be monetary or non-monetary. Salaries and non-monetary benefits form a significant part of part of an organization's budget.

### **2.3.6 Employee Relations**

Employee relations is the process of managing employees according to the terms and conditions which bind them to the employer. Issues arising from employment are dealt with either directly or using trade unions. Employee relations are wide in scope. They include relationships between employees and trade unions and also individual employees' relationship with their employers. However, there is an increasing trend to move from trade unions to dealing with employees directly (Armstrong, 2009).

Price (2007) argues that employee relations are no longer focused on collective bargains but address all issues faced by employees in the organization. Price (2007) insists that employee

relations address all aspects of relationships between personnel and their employer. The relationship between the employee and employer represents a powerful relationship where the exchange of pay for labor takes place. The employer has authority to direct the goals of the organization. On the other hand, the employee can decide to hamper the achievement of these goals, thus resulting in a conflict of interest. It is important to note that the employer-employee relationship include nonmonetary things such as length of working hours, working conditions, safety and health of workers and holiday time (Price, 2007).

## **2.4 Extent of Involvement of Line Managers in Human Resource**

### **Management**

The functions of line managers have evolved over time. Over the last two decades, there has been an increasing urge to increase the responsibilities of line managers to include people management (Brewster & Larsen, 2000). The outcome is that human resource expert's share the people management functions with line managers. There is increasing evidence to suggest that the human resource management functions have been devolved to line managers in many organizations (Kulik& Bainbridge, 2006).

Devolvement is the extent to which human resource management functions have been shared with line managers and other departments within the organization (Price, 2007). Traditional human resource management functions include rewards and recognition, payment of salaries, employee performance appraisal and training and development. As a result of the shared functions, human resource experts are focusing more on strategic aspects of human resource management such as industrial relations and long term personnel planning (Njau, 2012).

Line managers are directly involved with realizing business goals and objectives by supervising individual employees and teams to ensure that performance standards are maintained. As a result, the responsibility of line managers to carry out functions of human

resource management is perceived as critical to the success of the organization. Since line managers interact with employees on a daily basis, they can directly motivate and influence positive behavior and attitudes of employees better than human resource experts (Andersen, Cooper & Zhu, 2007).

Management skills and leadership is another important aspect of human resource functions undertaken by line managers in organizations (Budhwar, 2000). The management component involves application of formal human resource standards such as training and development, performance appraisals and recruitment and selection activities. The leadership component on the other hand requires that line managers demonstrate leadership characteristics and behaviors. These include supporting individual and teams of employees, making important decision on employees' issues and motivating employees to improve performance. Both management and leadership skills influence change in attitudes and behavior of employees thus are critical to effective application of human resource functions by line managers (Purcell & Kinnie, 2007).

Line managers perform human resource functions when they are involved in recruitment and selection, reward management, employee relations, performance management and training and development activities (Budhwar, 2000). Line managers' ability to apply human resource skills is perceived as a critical determinant of employee job satisfaction (Harney & Jordan, 2008).

There are two approaches to assessing human resource management activities of line managers (Brandl, Madsen & Madsen, 2009). Line managers role in human resource management functions can be assessed through their involvement in recruitment and selection, pay benefits, training and reduction and staff expansion. The involvement of line manager's in human resource management roles was measured through their engagement in

resolving conflicts between senior management and employees (Brandl et al., 2009). These involved five basic organizational functions: setting objectives, organizing, and employee motivation and communicating organizational strategies, measurement of performance and establishing employee development strategies. Brandl et al., (2009) also provides other management activities which line managers are involved in. These include staff training and development, staff well-being, coaching and supervision, delegation, team building, communication of values and attitudes, and handling conflicts.

Line managers have also been involved in other aspects of human resource management such as recruitment and selection, pay and benefit, managing grievance and discipline, training and development, performance appraisal and career development. Budhwar (2000) noted six aspects of human resource managements that line managers were increasingly involved in. These were found to be workforce expansion and reduction, recruitment, pay, training, health and safety, industrial relations. Organizations where line managers were involved in human resource functions in the United Kingdom showed they were likely to devolve the human resource function from the human resource department to line managers. Dalziel and Strange (2007) pointed out that there is increasing evidence that line managers are being trained to perform human resource functions, which emphasizes the involvement of line managers in human resource functions.

It has been noted that employee performance appraisal is one of the critical human resource functions that has been devolved to line managers. Since line managers are involved in assessing the need for training and development of employees, they have played a critical role in ensuring that a comprehensive training needs analysis is carried out. In other findings, researchers noted that some line managers were reluctant to take responsibility of performance management as a result; their involvement in the performance management

systems was barely minimal. Hassan (2011) observed that unwillingness among line managers to take part in employee performance management led to uneven devolution of this responsibility in organizations that were studied. As a result, their role was ambiguous. Dalziel and Strange (2007) also insisted that line managers are increasingly being involved in the human resource function of recruitment and selection. However, Dalziel and Strange (2007) emphasized that the decision to select candidates remained with the human resource management department. Line managers were involved due to the fact that they understood the needs of workers and also the nature of work that candidates would be engaged in. The specialist human resource manager still played a critical role in deciding which candidate was to be selected for the job.

Honey (2006) indicated that very little research has been conducted regarding the involvement of line managers in the human resource function of employee training and development. Employee training and development activities are often viewed as part of the performance appraisal process. As a result, line managers are often involved in identifying the training and development needs of various teams. Involvement of line managers in human resource management activities has the potential to create an environment where employee performance is monitored effectively and employees are satisfied with their work.

With regard to the human resource function of employee discipline, studies shows that line managers have been increasingly involved in resolving employee conflicts and ensuring discipline. Jayawardana and O'Donnell (2009) were of the view that line manager's tenure, gender and age were not influencing factors in the way line managers handled cases of employee discipline. However, the study showed that gender significantly influenced the way line managers handle employee grievances towards senior management. This is due to the fact that cases involving female employees were urgently handled compared to case

involving male employees. In addition, Renwick (2003) noted that handling of management issues involving employees depend upon the gravity of the issue being addressed.

In another study, Currie and Procter (2001) investigated how line managers were involved in the human resource function of pay and benefits. They noted that the role of line managers in determining employee pay and benefits varied from situation to situation. However, since the research study was conducted in a government owned hospital in the UK, this affected the way decisions on pay and benefits were decided. For instance, when the government was directly involved in determining employee pay and benefits, line managers had little role to play in the process.

Boxall and Purcell (2011) opined that line managers have been involved in employee career development together with human resource specialists. Human resource specialist provides critical support to identifying and planning for employee career development. This is due to the fact that many human resource specialist regard line managers as lacking the necessary knowledge and skills to manage the career of employees they are supervising (Hall & Torrington, 1998). This fact has led some researcher to conclude that the human resource specialist should shoulder the responsibility for poor human resource management in organizations especially in the area of career development (Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank & Ulrich, 2012).

The involvement of line managers in employee grievance and disciplinary cases requires that they have both supervisor and managerial handling styles. The study established that most human resource managers were directly involved in disciplinary and grievances meetings to ensure that good decisions prevailed (McConville, 2006). Budhwar and Fadzil (2000) on the other hand showed that line managers are increasingly taking disciplinary procedures. However, line managers are less involved when compared to human resource specialists. One

of the main reasons for little involvement of line managers in grievance and discipline duties include the fact that the work is time consuming and complex. In addition, most line managers fear that their weaknesses in handling grievances and discipline issues will be exposed (McConville, 2006).

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This section presents the methodology adopted in the operationalization of the research and achievement of the study objectives. The chapter covers the research design, population, data collection and data analysis.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This was a descriptive survey design. This design was suitable for the study because it enables the description of the current status of a population or phenomenon being studied (Babbie, 2002).

### **3.3 Population**

The target population of this study comprised of nineteen (19) line managers at the Thika Water and Sewerage Company Limited (2015/2016 strategic plan, page 43). All the line managers were studied.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire had two sections. Section A focused on the demographic data while section B covered the level of involvement of line managers in human resource management functions. The questionnaire was administered using the drop and pick later approach.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The collected data was first checked and compared for accuracy and quality. The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation. Findings were presented using tables and figures.



## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents response rate, demographic characteristics of the respondents and the extent of involvement of line managers in human resource management functions in Thika Water and Sewerage Company Limited.

### 4.2 Response Rate

Out of nineteen (19) questionnaires administered, a total of sixteen (16) filled questionnaires were returned. The response rate for the study was 84.2%. A minimal of 50% response rate is required, Mugenda and Mugenda (2003).

### 4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of respondents covered in this study included their gender, age, highest level of education and also the duration they had worked in Thika Water and Sewerage Company.

#### 4.3.1 Gender of the Respondents

Male were 62% while female were 38%. This implies that more of line managers in Thika Water and Sewerage Company are male gender.

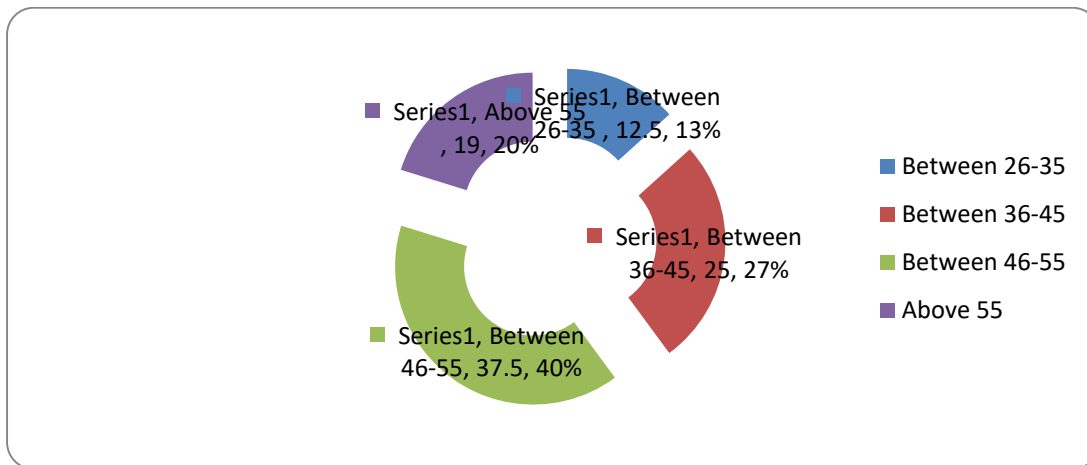
**Table 4.1: Gender of the Respondents**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	10	62
Female	6	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.2.2 Age Distribution of the Respondents

37.5% of the respondents were aged between 46 and 55 years, 25.0% were aged between 36 and 45 years, 19.0% indicate above 55 years whereas 12.5% noted between 26 and 35 years. This implies that majority of line managers in Thika Water and Sewerage Company are aged between 46 and 55 years.

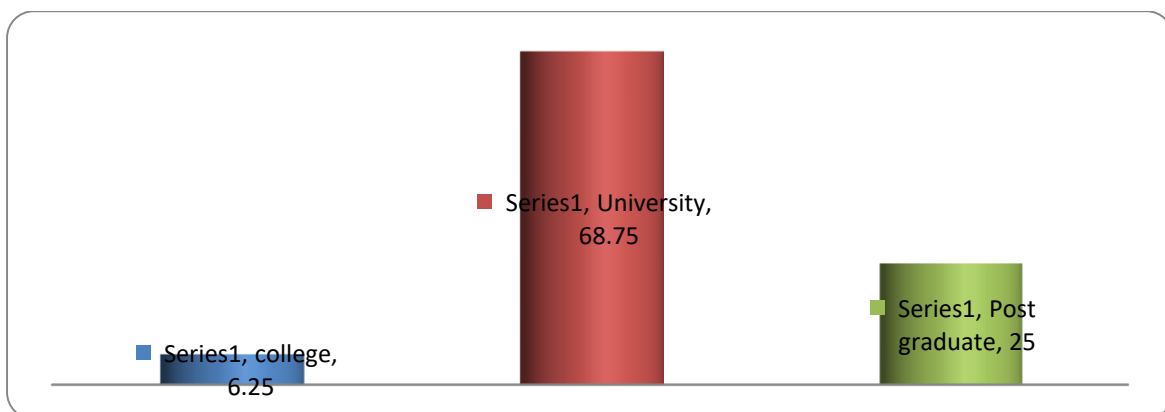
**Figure 4.1: Age distribution of the Respondents**



#### 4.2.3 Highest Level of Education of the Respondents

68.75% of the respondents indicated that have Bachelor's degree, 25.00% indicated Post graduate degree and 6.25% indicated college as their highest academic qualification. This implies that respondents were literate enough to interpret the topic of the study.

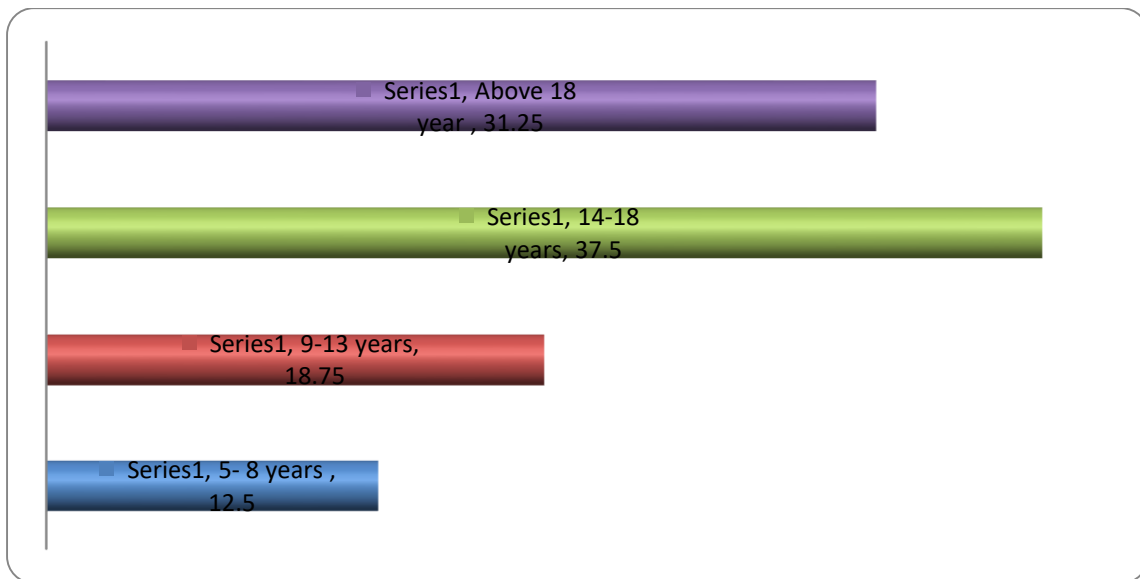
**Figure 4.2: Highest Level of Education of the Respondents**



#### 4.2.4 Length of Service of the Respondents

37.5% have worked in the organization for a period between 14 and 18 years, 31.25% have been in organization for above 18 years, 18.75% have been in the organization between 9 and 13 years whereas 12.50% indicated between 5 and 8 years. This implies that all the respondents have worked in the organization for at least five years.

**Figure 4.3: Length of Service of the Respondents**



#### 4.4 Extent of Involvement of Line Managers in Human Resource Management Functions

The human resource management functions covered in the study were human resource planning, recruitment and selection, training and development, reward management, performance management and employee relations management.

##### 4.4.1 Human Resource Planning

The line managers are involved in human resource planning to a moderate extent as shown by a mean score of 3.1291. This is in line with Aosa (2006) who insists that increased local and global competition has made organizations to adopt strategies that make them resilient, adaptable, agile and customer-forecast in order to succeed. In particular, human resource

function focus more on strategic planning for personnel, employee retention and talent development.

**Table 4.2: Involvement in Human Resource Planning**

	<b>Mean</b>
I always participate in development of policies for recruitment, absence control, motivation and reward	3.6437
I am always involved in defining requirements which involve preparing role profiles and person specifications	3.3875
I always participate in deciding terms and conditions of employment	2.3562
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.1291</b>

#### **4.4.2 Recruitment and Selection**

The line managers were involved in recruitment and selection to a great extent as shown by a mean score of 3.6775. This agrees with Hodgetts and Hegar (2008) who view selection of the right candidates for a job position as the current global challenge facing human resource experts in organizations. Global companies are finding that pre-employment screenings are critical. Human resource experts face challenges when recruiting and selecting employees.

**Table 4.3: Involvement in Recruitment and Selection**

	<b>Mean</b>
I always participate in planning recruitment campaigns	2.5250
I always participate in attracting candidates for positions in my department	3.8062
I always participate in reviewing and evaluating alternative sources of applicants	3.7188
I always participate in selecting candidates by sifting applications	4.5500
I always participate in interviewing candidates	3.7875
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.6775</b>

#### 4.4.3 Training and Development

The line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company are involved to a great extent in training and development as shown by a mean score of 3.5469. This concur with Harney and Jordan (2008) who indicated that an effective organization however, also requires that it has available within itself a pool of individuals who are qualified to accept increasing responsibilities to move into other higher level jobs with reasonable facility.

**Table 4.4: Involvement in Training and Development**

	<b>Mean</b>
I am always involved in training needs identification	4.5875
I always take part in development of training programs to improve employee performance and support career development	3.4125
I am always involved in provision of opportunities for personal growth and self-development	3.7625
I always participate in induction and development of high quality people	3.6437
I always participate in identification and improvement of skills	2.3875
I always take part in regular job analysis in relation to individual skills and organizational objectives.	3.3562
I always participate in assessing how modern technology can be used to replace routine tasks	3.8062
I always take part in performance assessment through identification of key tasks	3.4188
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.5469</b>

#### 4.4.4 Reward Management

The line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company are involved in reward management to a great extent as indicated by a mean score of 3.7188. According to Armstrong (2009) reward does not simply refer to compensation but also significantly influences the organizations ability to recruitment and retention talented employees (Budhwar, 2000).

**Table 4.5: Involvement in Reward Management**

	<b>Mean</b>
I am involved in compensation determination	3.9500
I always participate in remuneration of staff	4.6875
I take part in determination of employees benefits	2.4500
I always participate in bonuses determination	3.7875
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.7188</b>

#### **4.4.5 Performance Management**

The line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company are involved in performance management to a moderate extent as shown by a mean score of 3.2291. In line with this, Kulik and Bainbridge (2006) established that for employees' performance appraisal systems to be effective, line managers should be provided with the necessary information to help them carry out the evaluation process. In addition, they should be provided with the right performance measurement criteria.

**Table 4.6: Involvement in Performance Management**

	<b>Mean</b>
I am always involved in communication of strategy	3.7437
I always participate in measurement of performance/ appraisals	3.4875
I always participate in performance related pay determination	2.4562
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.2291</b>

#### **4.4.6 Employee Relations**

The line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company are involved in employee relations to a moderate extent as shown by a mean score of 3.4139. The study is supported by Price (2007) who noted that employee relations go beyond collective bargaining for

employees pay to include relationship between employer and employees. Employee relations try to understand the power relationship between employers and employees.

**Table 4.7: Involvement in Employee Relations**

	<b>Mean</b>
I always participate in determining terms and conditions of employment	3.6437
I am always involved in solving issues arising from employment	3.5875
I always take part in industrial relations	2.4562
I always participate in employment relationships	3.4250
I always participate in negotiation of pay and benefits	4.3062
I always participate in determining the length of the working day	3.7188
I always participate in defining the holiday time of employees	3.3876
I always participate in employee exit analysis	2.7865
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.4139</b>

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations, limitations of the study and suggestion for further studies.

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

The study revealed that the line managers were involved in human resource planning to a moderate extent. They, however, were involved in development of policies for recruitment, motivation and reward. The study established that line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company were involved in recruitment and selection to a great extent. They are involved in selecting candidates by sifting applications, attracting candidates for positions in their department, interviewing candidates and reviewing and evaluating alternative sources of applicants. The study showed that line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company were involved to a great extent in training and development mainly in training needs identification, assessing modern technologies and how they can be used to replace routine tasks. The study found that line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company were involved in reward management to a great extent including activities such as remuneration of staff, compensation determination and bonuses determination. The line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company were involved in performance management to a moderate extent although they participate in communication of strategy and measurement of performance/ appraisals. The study established that the line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company were involved in employee relations to moderate extent. However, they are involved in negotiation of pay and benefits, the length of the working day, determining terms and conditions of employment, solving issues arising from employment and employment relationships.



### **5.3 Conclusion**

The study concluded that the line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company were involved in recruitment and selection, training and development and also in reward management. Line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company were involved in human resource planning, performance management and employee relations to moderate extent. However, the line managers were not involved in defining the holiday time of employees, employee exit analysis and taking part in industrial relations.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

The study recommends that line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company should be involved in defining requirements which involve preparing role profiles of the employees. They should also be involved in determination of terms and conditions of employment as they are conversant with the company environment. The human resource managers should involve line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company in planning recruitment programs. The line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company should be involved in doing regular job analysis in relation to organizational objectives and individual skills because they properly understand the objective of the organization due to their strategic supervisory role. The line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company should be involved in determination of employees' rewards and benefits based on performance as they are the only one who can give the true picture of the employee's performance in the organization because of the direct interaction with them daily.

The study again recommends that line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company should be involved in performance related pay determination. This is because they have a closer relationship with the employee and can openly suggest to top management employees who have performed well and are worth for reward. The line managers should also be

involved in defining the holiday time of employees based on the workloads in their departments. Line managers of Thika Water and Sewerage Company should take part in industrial relations since they interact daily with many people including the society and hence they can promote competitive edge of the organization through bargaining and negotiations for the sake of the employees under them.

### **5.5 Limitations of the Study**

This was a case study focusing on a single company. The findings may not be generalized across many firms. Some respondents were unwilling to reveal information which was classified as confidential; hence the responses given were not complete.

### **5.6 Suggestion for Further studies**

The study recommends that other studies should be done to establish the level of involvement of line managers in human resource management functions in other firms to validate the findings.

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## APPENDIX: Questionnaire

Kindly answer the questions by putting a tick in the appropriate box or by writing in the space provided.

### SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. What is your Gender ? Male { } Female { }
2. What is your Age group?
 

Between 18-25	{ }	Between 26-35	{ }
Between 36-45	{ }	Between 46-55	{ }
Above 55	{ }		
3. What is your Highest Level of Education?
 

Secondary	{ }	College	{ }
University	{ }	Post Graduate	{ }
4. How long have you worked for the company?
 

Less than 5 years	{ }	5-8 years	{ }
9-13 years	{ }	14-18 years	{ }
Above 18 years	{ }		

### SECTION B: EXTENT OF INVOLVEMENT OF LINE MANAGERS IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

5. To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to your involvement in various human resource activities at the Thika Water and Sewerage Company?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>Human Resource Planning</b>					
I always participate in development of policies for recruitment, absence control, motivation and reward					
I am always involved in defining requirements which involve preparing role profiles and person specifications					
I always participate in deciding terms and conditions of employment					
<b>Recruitment and Selection</b>					

I always participate in planning recruitment campaigns					
I always participate in attracting candidates for positions in my department					
I always participate in reviewing and evaluating alternative sources of applicants					
I always participate in selecting candidates by sifting applications					
I always participate in interviewing candidates					
<b>Development and Training</b>					
I am always involved in training needs identification					
I always take part in provision of training programmes to improve current performance and support career development					
I am always involved in provision of opportunities for personal growth and self-development					
I always participate in induction and development of high quality people					
I always participate in identification and improvement of skills					
I always take part in regular job analysis in relation to organizational objectives and individual skills					
I always participate in reviewing the use of technology, in particular in replacing routine tasks					
I always take part in performance assessment through identification of key tasks					
<b>Reward Management</b>					
I am involved in compensation determination					
I always participate in remuneration of staff					
I take part in determination of employees benefits					
I always participate in bonuses determination					



<b>Performance Management</b>					
I am always involved in communication of strategy					
I always participate in measurement of performance/ appraisals					
I always participate in performance related pay determination					
<b>Employee Relations</b>					
I always participate in determining terms and conditions of employment					
I am always involved in solving issues arising from employment					
I always take part in industrial relations					
I always participate in employment relationships					
I always participate in negotiation of pay and benefits					
I always participate in determining the length of the working day					
I always participate in defining the holiday time of employees					
I always participate in employee exit analysis					

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME**