Perceived Effects of HIV/Aids on Performance in the Tea Factories of Bomet County-Kenya

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Abstract

The physical and mental wellbeing of workers is of paramount importance and is directly related to productivity in any organization thus an meaningful investment in human capital should insist on improving the health of workers in any work place (Loekppke et al, 2009).HIV/AIDS is an immunodeficiency virus that has had great negative impact on work populations both in the developing and developed world (Grassly et al, 2003). Waggoner, et al (1999), defined organizational performance as the ability of a firm to fulfill and meet its mission through sound management, strong governance and persistent rededication to achieving results. Companies have to be profit driven, customer focused, adaptable, entrepreneurial and sustainable in order to achieve their goals and mission. Bomet County is located in the beautiful sloping Western part of Kenya, in an administrative region within the Great Rift Valley. It covers an area of 1592.4 square kilometers with a mean monthly temperature of 18 degrees Celsius and annual rainfall ranges between 1,100 and 1,500 Millimeters, weather conducive to tea growing (Ministry of Agriculture, 2013).The objective of the study was to establish the perceived effects of HIV/AIDS on performance in the tea factories of Bomet County. Bomet County has five tea factories (Ministry of Agriculture, 2013). The study sampled 51 management level personnel in the five tea factories, 51 being 50% of the target population identified through stratified random sampling. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data. The study found out that the perceived effects of HIV/AIDS in the tea factories of Bomet County were among others, a high rate of abseentism and lowered output. HIV/AIDS did not however have a large impact on customer care or quality of product. The study recommended development and full implementation of HIV/AIDS policy, enhancement of social support and programs for management of staff within the factories living with HIV/AIDS and that the same should be extended to communities living in the County as part of corporate social responsibility of the tea factories.

Key Words: Organizational Performance, HIV/AIDS, perception, service delivery, corporate social responsibility, perception, output, financial performance, shareholder value, market performance, service delivery, customer satisfaction, assets, profits and return on assets

Introduction

Background of the Study

Organizational performance is dependent on how well management deals with the Human Capital among other factors, for instance, marketing, branding, quality control and financial management .Organizational performance can be greatly enhanced if management takes stock of the well being of staff (Lawler, 1990). Organizational performance has also been a measurement of the output of the processes at the organization in reference to set goals and objectives. In any organization, shareholder value, financial performance and market performance can be used to measure performance. In overall view, organizational performance is looked at as the measure of actual output compared to the intended output. Market performance is evaluated in terms of sales, market share performance and customer satisfaction. Economic value added to the money invested by shareholders is the main variable used to measure performance of shareholder value. Financial performance in an organization is measured in terms of return on assets, profits and return on investments. Various stakeholders improve organizational performance in any organization. Specialists who concern with performance of an organization include strategic planners, financial gurus, legal experts and all employees (Hailey et al, 2005).

Mauno et al (2005), sought to explain perception as the way in which the mind infers and deducts an event, an occurrence, an object, a system or a behavior. Perception could be different from reality. Individuals perceive things differently, according to a number of factors, for instance, emotional state, experience and motivation.

Two individuals observing the same phenomenon will have different perceptions of the same, depending on the influencing factors. In different emotional and motivational states, the two individuals will perceive the same phenomenon from different angles. Perception is an essential aspect of human behavior. People are either optimistic or pessimistic, depending on how they perceive things. Individuals who perceive situations positively are more likely to solve a problem efficiently than those who look at situations in a pessimistic way. A positive perception of affairs is important for any leadership qualities and for a good work environment in an organization.

Studies have been done to show that AIDS and HIV can have a negative impact of the performance of business ventures. When an employee in any given organization is living with HIV/AIDS, there are chances that his productivity will go down. Again, it is possible that performance of an organization can overall go down if its employees have been victims of AIDS and HIV. Work related stress can also affect the performance of an organization (George et al, 1993).

Statement of the Problem

Organizational performance is greatly affected by employee well being as health of employees is a factor in the success of any organization (Jones, 2005). The prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in 2012 in Kenya was 5.3% with 60% of the cases affecting the working population (Ministry of Health, 2012).The tea sector in Kenya offers employment to more than 10% of the population (Ministry of Agriculture,2013).

Fox et al (2004) did a research on the impact of HIV/AIDS on labor productivity in Kenya. The authors used retrospective cohort design to analyze the productivity and attendance rates of tea factories tea pickers who died or were medically retired due to HIV/AIDS related causes between the years 1997 to 2002 in western Kenya. The researchers did a comparison of daily output of tea leaves plucked, utilization of paid and unpaid leave and reassignment to less engaging tasks of 54 employees who had died or had been retired due to HIV/AIDS using longitudinal regression. It was found that employees affected or infected with HIV/AIDS plucked less tea leaves, had more sick days than other workers and spent more time doing less demanding work.

Larson et al (2008) also conducted a study on the effects of HIV/AIDS on tea workers in Kenya. The author collected data from 59 HIV/AIDS infected employees from a company and compared work output before and after the antiretroviral therapy was commenced. The results showed significant improvement in work output after months of therapy after the initial drop at the start of the therapy as compared to before the therapy started.

All the studies done on HIV/AIDS effects on performance in the Tea Industry have focused on the greater western region. The author proposes to do a more focused study by narrowing the area of research to one of the counties within the region specifically Bomet County which is less accessible and has less medical facilities as compared to the more affluent counties within the region.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to establish the perceived effects of HIV/AIDS on performance in the tea factories of Bomet County in Kenya.

Contributions of the Study

The tea sector in the country will be a beneficiary of the study. Tea estates managers will understand the effect of the HIV/AIDS cases amongst their workers on the performance of the sector.

This study will also be important to the agencies in the country that deal with HIV/AIDS management and the Government. The agencies can use the data to compute the benefits of administering antiretroviral therapy to AIDS affected patients. The agencies like the National AIDS Council can use this study to advise other stakeholders on how to improve on the wellbeing of their employees who are suffering from AIDS. Even though the study draws its subjects from the tea sector, the agencies can extrapolate the findings onto other sectors and use them to help manage HIV and AIDS cases of employees.

Researchers who wish to carry out thesis studies about AIDS effect of employment and productivity can also use the results of the study to write literature reviews and to test hypotheses. The results can be used for comparison purposes when doing studies of similar nature in a different sector or a different geographical location.

Data obtained from this study will be used to build research cases done by other researchers. The conclusion and suggestions will be helpful in creating new areas of research in the field of Human Resource Practice and Management.

Research Design and Methodology

A descriptive research design was adopted. The total population of the study comprised of management from the five tea factories in Bomet County (Rorok, Kobel, Kapkoros, Tirgaga and Mogogosiek factories).The sample was 50% of the total sample per factory picked randomly.

Table 1: Population and Sample

	Top Management		**Junior Management**	
Strata(Tea Factories)	Population	Sample	Population	Sample
Rorok	4	2	15	8
Kobel	7	4	12	6
Kapkoros	6	4	14	8
Tirgaga	8	4	15	8
Mogogosiek	5	2	10	5
Total	**30**	**16**	**66**	**35**

Primary data was collected using questionnaires and data analyzed using descriptive statistics

Respondents Characteristics

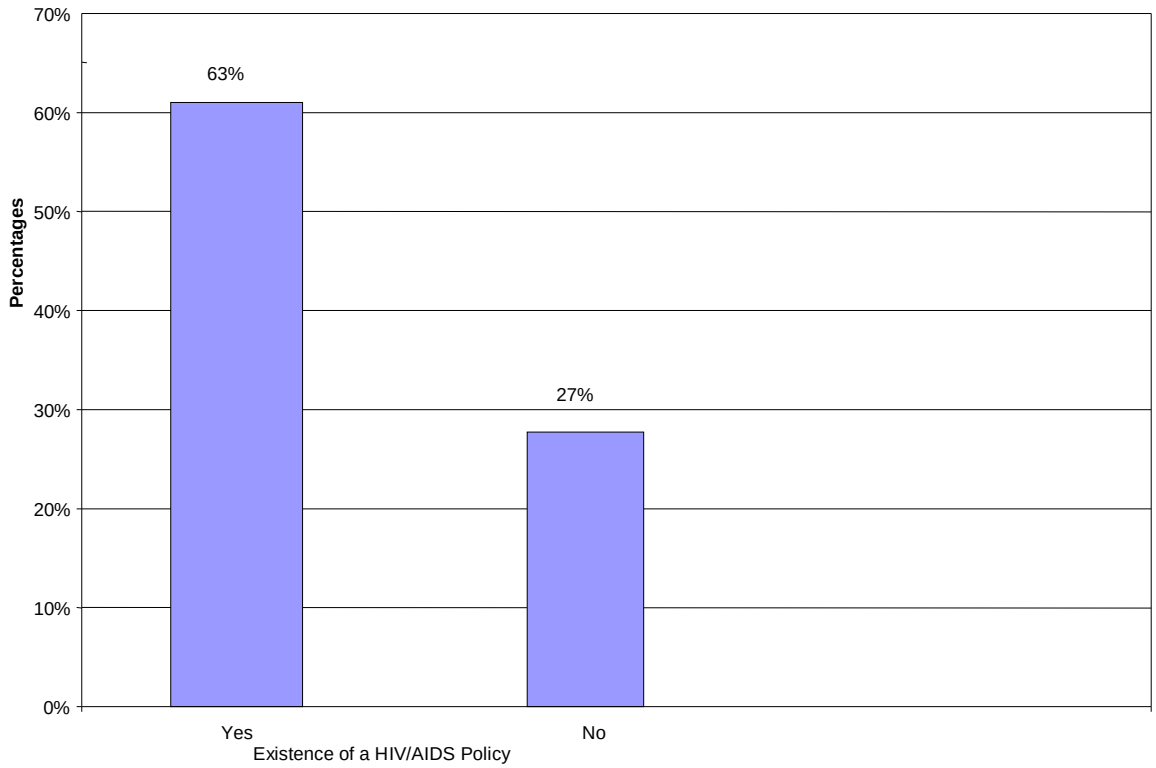
37 out of 51 questionnaires were received back signifying a 72.73% response rate.8% of this were in senior management, 25% middle and 67% in the lower cadres.80% of the respondents were males with only 20% being females suggesting a significant difference in gender representation in the Management at the Tea Factories in Bomet County.42% of the respondents were between 41-50 years, 21% above 50 years, 30% between 31-40 years with only 7% being below 30 years old. The respondents education background was 41% with post graduate education, 33% having a bachelor and 26% secondary certificate.64% of the respondents had over 10 years experience at the tea factories, 29% had between 5 and 10 years and only 7% had below 5 years length of continuous service.60% of the factories had between 21 to 100 employees, 30% had more than 100 employees with only 7% having over 200 employees. None of the factories had less than 20 employees.

Data Analysis and Findings

Existence of Organization HIV/AIDS policy

The respondents were asked to indicate whether their factories had a HIV/AIDS policy.

Figure 1: Existence of a HIV/AIDS Policy



Although it was commendable that 63% of the respondents indicated that their factories had a HIV/AIDS policy in place, 27% is a large proportion that did not have the policy in place. It is important to persuade these factories on the critical importance of developing and implementing this policy urgently.Futhermore, the study also established that 56% of the respondents had had the policy in place for more than 5 years, 34% less than 1 year with only 10% having had the policy for more than 5 years.

All the respondents indicated the critical importance of the policy and that its implementation was adhered to fully.

Percentage of Employees Living with HIV/Aids

The study revealed the difficulties involved in establishing the number of employees living with Hiv/Aids as the only way management were able to know is when the affected staff member was living openly as the information was treated with confidentiality. Through the resources that were consumed for the treatment and support of employees living with Hiv/Aids, conducting voluntary counselling and testing and encouraging employees to disclose status, management was able to establish that 54% of the employees were living with Hiv/Aids.

Perceived Impact of HIV/Aids on Performance

Table 2: Perceived Impact of HIV/Aids on Performance

Perceived Impact	Mean	Std. Deviation
Increased absenteeism due to sick leave	4.46	.884
Reduced output level	4.21	.997
Poor service delivery	4.04	.881
Reduced work unit productivity	3.92	.929
Lowered quality of output	3.67	.072
Lowered customer satisfaction	3.54	.884

Generally, HIV/AIDS had either a moderate or a large impact on performance of tea factories in Bomet County. Increased absenteeism due to sick off was found to have the greatest impact on performance of the tea factories with a mean of 4.46 followed by reduced output level of HIV positive employees with a mean of 4.21.

Reduced work performance and poor service delivery were the other factors that were impacted to a large extent. Increased customer dissatisfaction had the least impact on factory performance with a mean of 3.54. However, it had a moderate impact on the tea factory performance.

Conclusion

The study establishes that HIV/AIDS affects performance of tea factories in Bomet County with the greatest impact being absenteeism due to sick leave, reduced output level, work performance and service delivery while increased customer dissatisfaction was considered to have the least impact on performance of tea factories in Bomet County. The quality of output was however not significantly affected. Moreover the study concludes that most tea factories did not have a HIV policy which addressed the welfare of HIV positive employees. Those tea factories which had the HIV policy have had it for a very short period ranging from two to five years. Swindells et al (2012), states that the quality of life of HIV employees could be improved if the social support was enhanced. One of the ways of improving social support is implementing a comprehensive HIV policy within the factories.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the five tea factories in Bomet County should pay a lot of attention to addressing HIV/AIDS in their organizations. To start with, those factories that do not have a policy should develop one to clearly outline the welfare of HIV/AIDS infected employees. Moreover, strategies to address increased absenteeism due to sick offs as a result of HIV/AIDS should be addressed adequately. This can be done through establishment of contingency plans and giving employees health insurance covers in order to reduce the adverse effects on performance. Reduced output level of HIV positive employees, reduced work performance and poor service delivery should also be adequately addressed by the five tea factories in Bomet County as they were found to have a large impact on performance.

The study also recommends that the policy should be extended to the communities living within Bomet County as this will have a positive impact on the factories.

Suggestions for Further Research

First, this study focused on all the five tea factories in Bomet County. Therefore, generalisations could not adequately be extended to the specific tea factories as the factories had varying financial resources and management personnel to address HIV/AIDS. Based on this fact among others, it was therefore recommended that a narrow based study covering a specific tea factory in Bomet County should be done to establish the effects of HIV/AIDS on performance of that specific tea factory. Similar surveys to this can also be replicated in a few years to come to assess if the effects of HIV/AIDS on performance of the tea factories have changed as the tea factory industry in Bomet County continues to change. The scope of the study could also be extended to include not only employees living with HIV/AIDS but also those affected.

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