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**GRIEVANCE HANDLING PROCEDURES AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN
THE WATER SERVICE SECTOR IN KENYA. A CASE STUDY OF NAIROBI CITY
WATER AND SEWERAGE COMPANY**

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ABSTRACT

The practice of managing employee relations in organizations has been observed to influence staff performance in one way or the other. For the practice to be more effective, leaders and managers are required to adopt effective respect, good channels of communication and build trust between individuals. The general objective of this study was to assess the effect of grievance handling procedures on employee performance of NCWSC Ltd. The Pluralist theory served as the primary theoretical framework for theoretical debate. 3239 middle and upper-level management staff members at NCWSC who were eligible for unionization made up the study's target population. Using a stratified selection strategy, 356 individuals were selected from the target population to serve as the sample, and data were gathered through the use of questionnaires as research instruments. A descriptive research design was employed in the study. a pilot study to confirm the reliability and validity of the research. The data were assessed using both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS version 22. Study findings were presented using graphs, tables and descriptive summaries. The study established that; Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company's grievance resolution process is effective in settling disagreements, according to survey participants, who moderately agreed on an average mean score of 3.5266. With a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.219$ and a p-value of 0.008, grievance resolution demonstrated a modest but significant positive link, suggesting that there is a slight benefit to improving grievance resolution. Finally, a moderate regression effect ($\beta = 0.187$; $p = 0.019$) of grievance handling procedures on employee performance suggested that settling grievances has a beneficial impact on employee performance. The study concludes that grievance handling procedures have a positive influence on employee performance at Nairobi City Water and Sewerage company. The study found that poor co-ordination between part at NCWS in grievance resolutions. The study recommends fostering collaboration between key stakeholders, such as employees, management and labor unions, to create a transparent and structured grievance resolution process.

Keywords: *Grievance Handling Procedures, Employee Performance, Water Service, Kenya, Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company*

INTRODUCTION

Employee relations encompass the intricate dynamics between an organization and its workforce, focusing on creating a positive and productive work environment. A critical component of this is grievance handling, which involves the systematic process of addressing employee complaints or concerns related to workplace issues, such as unfair treatment, discrimination, or policy violations (Tyce, 2019). Effective grievance handling fosters trust, ensures fair resolution of disputes, and enhances employee morale, contributing to improved performance and organizational stability (Verčič, 2021). Poorly managed grievances, however, can lead to disengagement, low productivity, and workplace conflicts, undermining overall performance. A study how Starbucks has implemented structured grievance handling processes to maintain its reputation for strong employee relations. The company encourages open communication through channels like partner forums and anonymous reporting systems, allowing employees, referred to as “partners,” to voice concerns about workplace issues. These mechanisms have helped resolve disputes related to scheduling or workload, contributing to higher employee satisfaction and performance (Colenberg, Jylhä & Arkesteijn, 2021). However, Starbucks has faced challenges with grievances related to unionization efforts. Allegations of ignoring or mishandling complaints about anti-union practices have led to employee dissatisfaction and legal disputes, highlighting the need for transparent and impartial grievance processes to sustain performance.

Huawei has established formal grievance mechanisms to address employee concerns, aligning with its “wolf culture” of collective achievement. The company provides platforms for employees to report issues related to compensation or workplace policies, which are handled through internal committees to ensure fairness (Salas-Vallina, Alegre & López-Cabrales, 2021). These processes have helped resolve disputes efficiently, boosting employee morale and productivity. However, Huawei’s intense work culture, including the “996” schedule, has led to grievances about burnout and work-life balance. The failure to adequately address these complaints has caused employee disengagement, negatively impacted performance and revealed gaps in grievance handling effectiveness.

In the United Kingdom, the John Lewis Partnership exemplifies successful grievance handling through its employee ownership model. Employees, as partners, have access to a robust grievance system involving elected councils that mediate disputes and ensure fair resolutions (Nechanska, Hughes & Dundon, 2020). This transparent process fosters trust, enhances employee engagement, and drives performance. In contrast, Royal Mail has struggled with grievance handling, particularly during disputes over pay and pensions. Poorly managed grievances, coupled with ineffective communication with the Communication Workers Union (CWU), have led to strikes and low morale, hampering employee performance and organizational stability.

TD Bank in Canada has implemented effective grievance handling procedures, including confidential reporting channels and dedicated HR teams to address employee concerns promptly. This approach, combined with a focus on diversity and mental health, has resolved workplace disputes efficiently, leading to high employee satisfaction and productivity. Conversely, SNC-Lavalin's mishandling of grievances related to unethical practices and governance scandals has eroded employee trust. The lack of transparent grievance processes contributed to disengagement and poor performance, underscoring the link between ethical grievance handling and employee morale (Cooke et al., 2019).

AB InBev has prioritized grievance handling to maintain a motivated workforce, offering employees access to formal channels to address concerns about wages or restructuring. These processes have helped resolve disputes fairly, supporting employee performance and loyalty. However, in Belgium, AB InBev faced challenges when grievances over job cuts were not addressed promptly, leading to strikes and reduced productivity. This highlights the importance of timely and transparent grievance resolution in maintaining employee trust and performance in a unionized environment.

In African organizations, grievance handling is shaped by cultural, economic, and social factors. The communal culture in many African societies emphasizes collective resolution of disputes, often favoring informal mechanisms like mediation over formal procedures (Lopez-Cabrales & Valle-Cabrera, 2020). Effective grievance handling fosters teamwork and loyalty, enhancing employee performance. In South Africa's informal sector, however, the lack of formal grievance processes for workers in agriculture or vending leads to unresolved disputes, low morale, and poor productivity. Strengthening labor protections and formal grievance systems is critical to improving performance in these sectors (Spurk & Straub, 2020).

In Senegal, Sonatel has implemented robust grievance handling processes, including anonymous reporting and mediation committees, to address employee concerns about compensation or career development. These efforts have resolved disputes effectively, boosting employee engagement and performance. In contrast, Compagnie Sucrière Sénégalaise (CSS) has faced challenges with grievances over poor working conditions and low wages. The company's failure to establish transparent grievance mechanisms led to strikes and low productivity, highlighting the need for structured processes to maintain employee trust and performance (Ali & Anwar, 2021).

Tanzania Breweries Limited (TBL) has implemented effective grievance handling through open communication channels and HR-led mediation. This has addressed employee concerns about safety or compensation, fostering a motivated workforce and strong performance. Conversely, Tanzania Electric Supply Company (TANESCO) has struggled with grievance handling, particularly over delayed salaries and poor working conditions. The lack of timely resolution led to strikes, low morale, and reduced

productivity, underscoring the importance of effective grievance processes for employee performance.

In Rwanda, Bank of Kigali has prioritized grievance handling through structured policies and confidential reporting systems, ensuring fair resolution of workplace disputes. This has enhanced employee trust, satisfaction, and performance. However, Roko Construction has faced challenges with grievances over worker safety and underpayment. The absence of robust grievance mechanisms led to labor unrest and poor productivity, demonstrating the negative impact of ineffective dispute resolution on employee performance.

In Kenya, effective grievance handling is critical for fostering productive workplaces, supported by strong trade unions advocating for fair dispute resolution (Wangari & Macharia, 2019). Safaricom excels in this area, with transparent grievance procedures, including mediation and anonymous reporting, which address employee concerns promptly. This has led to high engagement, low turnover, and strong performance. In contrast, Mumias Sugar Company's failure to handle grievances over unpaid wages and poor conditions resulted in strikes, low morale, and financial decline. The lack of transparent grievance processes eroded trust, significantly impacting employee performance and organizational success.

Grievance Handling Procedures

Grievance handling procedures refer to the structured methods and protocols established by an organization to effectively address and resolve employee complaints, dissatisfaction, or concerns within the workplace (Verčič, 2021). Grievance handling procedures encompass the legally mandated mechanisms that organizations must implement to address employee complaints in accordance with labor laws and regulations (Tyce, 2019). Grievance handling procedures are the structured guidelines set forth by the human resources department to manage and mediate disputes between employees and the organization. These procedures involve a step-by-step approach, often starting with informal discussions and escalating to more formal stages if needed, such as involving supervisors, managers, or designated grievance committees (Salas-Vallina, Alegre & López-Cabrales, 2021).

Effectively handling employee procedures in the office is essential for creating a structured, productive, and harmonious work environment. Clear and well-implemented procedures, such as onboarding, performance evaluations, grievance handling, and exit protocols, ensure that employees understand what is expected of them and how the organization operates (Tyce, 2019). When these procedures are managed efficiently, it minimizes misunderstandings, reduces conflicts, and fosters a sense of fairness and transparency. This is particularly important as employees who feel that

processes are consistently and fairly applied tend to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, which in turn boosts their morale and productivity.

Effective administration of staff operations also improves adherence to internal regulations and labor laws, lowering the possibility of legal issues for the company. A culture of accountability is fostered by the uniform application of policies such as leave management, disciplinary actions, and workplace safety measures, which guarantee that all workers are treated similarly and fairly (Verčič, 2021). Additionally, by reducing workplace hazards like turnover, inefficiency, and absenteeism, this ultimately improves the company's overall performance and stability. Employee commitment and engagement in their employment is more likely to persist when they are aware that professional and established practices are in place.

Employee Performance

This is a term that involves evaluating how well employees meet their job responsibilities, achieve goals, and align with organizational expectations and standards (Spurk & Straub, 2020). Employee performance denotes the collective output and contributions of individuals within an organization, measured against predefined objectives, key performance indicators (KPIs), and competencies. It involves the systematic tracking of employee achievements, skills, growth, and potential for advancement. Employee performance signifies the dynamic process of an individual's growth, learning, and skill enhancement over time. It involves continuous efforts to refine one's abilities, acquire new knowledge, and adapt to evolving job demands (Ali & Anwar, 2021).

Employee performance in Kenya is shaped by a mix of cultural, economic, and organizational factors. In a diverse workforce, performance is often influenced by an employee's access to resources, training, and development opportunities (Wangari & Macharia, 2019). Organizations in Kenya, ranging from small enterprises to large multinationals, place increasing emphasis on aligning employee performance with strategic goals through tools like KPIs and performance appraisals (Ontita & Kinyua, 2020). However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to continuous learning, and sometimes unclear performance expectations can hinder optimal performance.

Measuring employee performance involves evaluating how well employees fulfill their job responsibilities and contribute to organizational goals using various methods. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) provide quantifiable metrics tied to specific objectives, while performance appraisals offer formal evaluations from supervisors (Cooke, Cooper, Bartram, Wang & Mei, 2019). Self-assessment and peer reviews encourage introspection and team feedback, while customer feedback, productivity metrics, and quality assessments provide direct measures of output and service quality. Attendance, punctuality, training progress, and behavioral assessments further ensure that employees

are meeting expectations and continuously improving, providing a comprehensive view of their effectiveness within the organization (Tyce, 2019).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Organizations exhibit diverse outcomes in implementing employee relations practices, with many achieving positive enhancements in staff performance through effective grievance handling, while others foster toxic environments marked by persistent conflicts between subordinates and senior management. In such adversarial settings, unresolved grievances can lead to demotivation and disengagement, resulting in diminished productivity and efficiency (Bulińska-Stangrecka & Bagieńska, 2021). Employees may hesitate to invest extra effort or innovate when grievances related to unfair treatment or policy violations remain unaddressed, exacerbating turnover and morale issues. There is a pressing need to examine the direct impact of employee empowerment through structured grievance resolution and participatory decision-making on organizational dynamics, which this study aims to explore empirically. Over the years, the Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC) has grappled with achieving its core objectives in service delivery to Nairobi residents, facing challenges such as recurrent water shortages driven by population expansion and insufficient infrastructure, substantial non-revenue water losses from leaks, limited sewerage coverage leading to sanitation deficits, financial limitations hindering maintenance and upgrades, sporadic contamination risks, and suboptimal customer engagement (Ontita & Kinyua, 2020).

NCWSC's leadership has pursued employee relations initiatives to boost productivity, yet the absence of a supportive framework for grievance handling has stifled professional growth, eroding employee skills and competencies. Despite these efforts, the empirical effectiveness of grievance procedures and empowerment strategies in enhancing performance remains underexplored, particularly in addressing operational inefficiencies.

The field of employee relations, particularly grievance handling, has garnered significant scholarly attention for its role in enhancing workplace dynamics. Samwel (2018) explored employee relations strategies in Tanzanian small businesses, emphasizing grievance resolution mechanisms like mediation and open communication, and found a positive correlation with individual and organizational performance. Similarly, Arimie and Oronsaye (2020) investigated organizational relationships and employee interactions, revealing that neglecting psychological needs through poor grievance handling fosters demotivation and mistreatment, negatively impacting performance. Kanyaa (2021) examined worker relations strategies in Kitui County, identifying effective grievance processes as key to boosting staff performance, confirming a positive relationship. Achieng (2018) studied employee relations in public universities in Western Kenya, noting that structured grievance handling significantly enhanced employee productivity. Naliaka (2019) reported a positive influence of employee relations on organizational performance but overlooked the specific impact of grievance handling on individual

employee performance, leaving a critical gap. This lack of comprehensive research on how grievance handling directly affects employee performance at the Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC) has hindered the development of effective strategies, potentially stunting organizational growth and operational success amid challenges like water shortages, infrastructure deficits, and poor employee engagement (Ontita & Kinyua, 2020). This study addressed this gap by empirically exploring the role of grievance handling in enhancing employee performance and productivity at NCWSC.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To examine the effect of grievance resolution procedures on employee performance of NCWSC Ltd.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The results from the field guides government officials and policy developers, as they are in a position to offer guidelines to guide the practice in organizations and general applications by Human resource professionals. With such guidelines, industrial actions might be minimized and good working conditions promoted in the country. The study's findings helped management identify areas for improvement by showing how employee relations practices impact employee performance. Through guidance by policy documents, managers are in a better position to formulate employee relations guidelines at the workplace and train their employees on teamwork and collaboration aimed at enhancing organizational effectiveness. Finally, study findings provide a clear description of the cause and effect of the study variables, and this goes a long way in helping scholars and students in colleges and universities get a better understanding of key concepts and later on carry out investigations in other organizations and contribute to a better understanding of the same.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The primary goal of the research was to evaluate how NCWSC Ltd. employees' performance was impacted by employee relations. A total of 3534 workers at NCWSC's water corporation were the focus of the study. At the company's offices on Kampala Road in the Industrial Area of Nairobi, questionnaires were distributed. The study took three months to complete and was based on primary data. The research was carried out from January to September of 2025.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

The study's theoretical review comprises of Human Relations theory, Unitarist and Pluralist theory. The main theory forming the basis of theoretical arguments was the Pluralist theory.

Pluralist Theory

The theory is attributed to Robert Dahl in 1958; it's based on the assumption that employment relations recognize and accept the existence of diverse interests and conflicts within an organization. Unlike the unitarist theory, which assumes a single source of authority and common interests, the pluralist approach acknowledges that employees and management may have different perspectives, goals, and priorities (Djajasinga, Sulastri, Sudirman, Sari & Rihardi, 2021). It views organizations as complex social systems comprising various groups with their own distinct interests, such as labor unions, employee associations and management. The theory recognizes that these groups may have different viewpoints and may sometimes engage in negotiations and bargaining to protect and advance their respective interests. The theory is based on the assumption that there is no single source of authority in leadership. Instead, different groups have their own spheres of influence and power, leading to a distribution of authority and decision-making. Labor unions and other employee representatives are seen as legitimate advocates for employee interests, while management represents the interests of the organization's owners or shareholders (Cooke, Liu, Liu, & Chen, 2019). The theory holds that these groups should engage in collective bargaining and negotiations to address conflicting interests and find mutually acceptable solutions. The importance of the theory lies in its recognition of the complexity and diversity within organizations. By acknowledging the existence of different interest groups, it breeds inclusive decision-making processes, where multiple perspectives are considered and potential conflicts are addressed constructively.

Furthermore, the theory supports the idea that employees have a right to organize and join labor unions or other representative groups. These groups play a crucial role in advocating for employee rights, negotiating fair wages and working conditions and ensuring employees have a voice in decisions that affect them (Tyce, 2019). Marxist theory offers a more critical view, arguing that pluralist theory underestimates the depth of class conflict within organizations and the unequal power dynamics between capital and labor. Marxist scholars emphasize that true engagement and harmony cannot be achieved without addressing the fundamental economic inequalities that drive conflict. Systems Theory, further broadens the pluralist view by suggesting that conflict and cooperation within organizations are part of a larger, interdependent social system. This perspective emphasizes the importance of balancing competing interests through institutional frameworks and processes.

One limitation of the theory is that it may lead to increased bureaucracy and inefficiency in decision-making processes. With multiple interest groups involved, reaching a consensus on important matters may take time and effort, potentially slowing down organizational responsiveness. Moreover, in some cases, the pluralist approach may lead to adversarial relationships between different interest groups, such as labor unions and management. This adversarial stance can result in frequent conflicts and an emphasis on

individual group interests rather than the overall well-being of the organization (Krekel, Ward & De-Neve, 2019). If not managed effectively, these conflicts can impede organizational performance and hinder cooperation and collaboration. Additionally, the theory may not fully address power imbalances between different interest groups. In certain situations, one group may have significantly more power and influence than others, which can lead to unequal bargaining positions and potentially marginalize the voices of less powerful groups.

The pluralist theory was highly relevant to employee involvement as it recognized the workplace as a complex system where multiple stakeholder's employers, employees, and unions each have distinct interests and perspectives (Cooke, Liu, Liu, & Chen, 2019). According to pluralist theory, conflicts between these groups are natural and inevitable, but they can be managed through negotiation, collective bargaining, and inclusive decision-making processes. Employee involvement, as viewed through the lens of pluralist theory, is crucial because it provides a structured way for employees to voice their concerns, contribute to decision-making, and participate in shaping workplace policies.

Empirical Literature Review

Grievance Resolution Procedures and Employee Performance

Nwankwo, Nkechi and Adanso (2023) investigated the impact of industrial relations techniques on Nigeria's public sector productivity. The Port Harcourt Electricity Company employees were the study's target population, and it employed a descriptive methodology. The study employed 602 staff members in all. Data for the study were gathered from primary sources, and inferential analysis techniques were used for analysis. Study findings established that staff engagement in industrial actions positively influenced productivity of Port Harcourt Electricity Company. The study recommended for the promotion of justice and fairness in employment practices in the Nigerian public sector.

Desmond and Zwingina (2019) investigated the impact of grievance handling protocols on staff performance in the Nigerian National Assembly. In this study, a survey research design was used. Participants in the study were 6990 workers from the National Assembly of Nigeria. Regression analysis was the statistical method employed. The results showed that employee performance in terms of employee commitment in the Nigerian National Assembly is positively impacted by grievance management procedures. The study concluded that since the implementation of grievance handling mechanisms like collective bargaining, grievances, and the open-door policy improved employee performance in terms of commitment, Nigeria's National Assembly management should keep using them.

Mulunda, Were and Muturi (2018) conducted research on the connection between employee productivity and collective bargaining in Nairobi County's energy sector. The study's target population in the industry was 5001 people. The study obtained a sample of 356 people by grouping employees according to the firms they work for and their management level. The study used interview schedules and questionnaires as data gathering instruments. The study used descriptive analysis approaches to analyze the data collected, with a focus on qualitative data. The study found a strong and favorable correlation between employee productivity in Nairobi County's Energy sector and collective bargaining.

Wijesooriya, Tennakoon & Lasanthika (2021) investigated the effect of the grievance handling mechanism on the extra-work performance of shop floor employees in the Sri-Lankan biscuit manufacturing industry. The quantitative approach was utilized in deductive reasoning to verify the theoretical claims. Three well-known Sri Lankan cookie companies, totaling 156 employees as a representative sample, completed self-administered questionnaires with responses on a five-point Likert scale. To examine the data, multiple regression analysis was used. All of the markers had a statistically significant ability to influence the EWP, according to the data, with felt fairness and top management commitment appearing as the most significant predictors of EWP among shop floor employees.

Chow, Collingridge and Ramirez (2023) examined how the Facilitated Discussion technique is used in a healthcare setting to manage employment grievances. Semi-structured interviews with implementers, developers, and participants in guided conversations were part of the research's qualitative methodology. To find significant themes, the interviews were verbatim transcribed, recorded, and submitted to thematic analysis techniques. The participants, who included human resources personnel as well as administrative and clinical professionals who had taken part in the facilitated conversation process, were not limited in number. The majority of participants agreed with restorative justice principles and felt the process was valuable. The findings suggested that training facilitators and emphasizing the benefits of guided talks at all organizational levels could lead to improved adoption.

Yidana (2022) identified the reasons behind workplace disputes and the measures implemented in educational establishments to address them. In order to accomplish this, the study examined academic publications on disputes in global educational institutions. We looked at studies published between 1990 and 2021 from 25 different nations. Two criteria were used to examine 63 articles in total: the techniques for handling workplace conflicts and the perceived causes of workplace conflicts. The results indicate that personal variables resulting from communication gaps, unfavorable views, value differences, personal interests, power dynamics, and emotionally connected concerns account for the majority of conflicts in educational institutions (80%).

Haile and Kassahun (2019) conducted research on how staff productivity and employee relations affected Ethiopian-based businesses that dealt with the import and export of goods. The study focused on 200 employees of Addis Ababa-registered export and import companies. From the population, the study obtained an appropriate sample through systematic sampling. Sample participants were engaged in 3-month' intervals. Primary data tools were used and participants were provided with questionnaires and engaged in interviews. The study established that well maintained employee relations contribute to higher performance of staff in export and import organizations.

Taliyah (2019) undertook an investigation to understand the link between work-based relations and their influence on the productivity levels of employees in Bangalore. First, this study outlined the present employee relations practices of Kavya Systems using a descriptive technique. A causal method was employed to determine a relationship between the factors influencing employee performance. A correlation between employee performance and employee relationship qualities was found using statistical hypothesis testing. The study concludes that by improving employee relations practices, a company can raise employee performance and, as a result, overall organizational productivity.

Samwel (2018) investigated the link between ER and productivity levels of employees across organizations in the state of Tanzania. Organizations from across sectors of the economy were targeted and employees participated in the study. The study targeted 387 individuals from small business across all sectors of the economy. It was observed; Tanzanian small firms recognized the need of maintaining good employee relations and knew when to take remedial action to lessen bad employee relations within the organization. Furthermore, a statistically significant positive association between employee relations and achievement on both an individual and organizational level was shown by the data.

Salas-Vallina, Alegre and López-Cabrales (2021) explored, using the work demands-resource model and social exchange theory as a basis, the relationship between performance in a sample of extremely large businesses and well-being-oriented human resource management (WBHRM). The study also examined the potential moderating role that middle managers' leadership could play in the association between workers' well-being and WBHRM. The results demonstrated that engaging leadership behavior, which has a direct impact on worker performance, fosters true WBHRM adoption.

Ahmed, Khan, Thitivesa, Siraphatthada and Phumdara (2020) examined how employee information sharing functions as a moderating factor in the connection between higher education employee engagement and organizational success. With an emphasis on a practical sample frame, this study employed a non-probability sampling design and a quantitative research methodology. The findings demonstrated that employee involvement significantly and favorably affects the success of organizations. It was also

discovered that knowledge sharing significantly boosted an organization's effectiveness. Moreover, the association between employee engagement and organizational success was only partially mediated by knowledge sharing.

Badrianto and Ekhsan (2020) investigated the effects of PT. Nesinak Industries' work environment and job satisfaction on employees' output. The business produces rubber replacement parts for electronics and cars. Eighty-eight respondents who were employed in the production division made up the study's sample. Quantitative methodologies are employed in this investigation. Questionnaires were completed by pre-selected respondents to supply data for this research. Multiple linear regression analysis was the method used for data analysis. The study's altering work environment and job satisfaction both had a partial and simultaneous positive and significant impact on employee performance, according to the results of the partial t test and simultaneous f-test.

Dong and Loang (2023) examined the impact of pay compensation on worker performance at China's top logistics company, Shengshitongda. The study gathered data through in-depth employee interviews using a qualitative research methodology. The results of the study indicated that wage compensation had a significant impact on worker motivation and performance and that an equitable and transparent pay plan increased worker loyalty and satisfaction. The survey also discovered that workers were more likely to be unhappy in their jobs and less productive if they thought their compensation was unjust or inadequate. In addition to pay, the survey found that employees place a high importance on non-cash advantages like opportunities for career advancement and work-life balance.

Andika and Darmanto (2020) discovered the effects of money and work discipline on employees' performance. Ex post facto research techniques and a quantitative methodology were applied in this study. PT Tirta Kencana Tata Warna Bengkulu used a strict sampling method to choose forty employees for the study. Multiple regression analysis is the data analysis technique used in this investigation. The results of the study showed that employee performance was positively and significantly impacted by both salary and work discipline. When salary and work discipline are combined, factors beyond the study's scope impact employee performance by 34.4% and 65.6%, respectively.

Riyanto, Endri and Herlisha (2021) investigated the association between employee engagement as the mediating variable and motivation, work satisfaction, and performance. Information technology (IT) companies with headquarters in Jakarta and Bandung, Indonesia, made up the research sample. System developers who manage system development tasks for a project or as a component of an ongoing project made up the research respondents. A convenience sample of 103 IT developers was asked to

provide their reactions. Partial least squares (PLS) were employed in the research model analysis technique using SMART PLS Ver 3.0 software. Employee involvement had a large mediation influence on motivation and job satisfaction, but it did not directly improve performance. Research has shown that employees' motivation positively impacts their productivity as IT experts, even though job satisfaction is a unique component.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This is a structure that directed and provided guidance for the research study's design and execution. It served as a roadmap for the researcher, providing a clear outline of the key concepts, variables, and relationships that were investigated in the study.

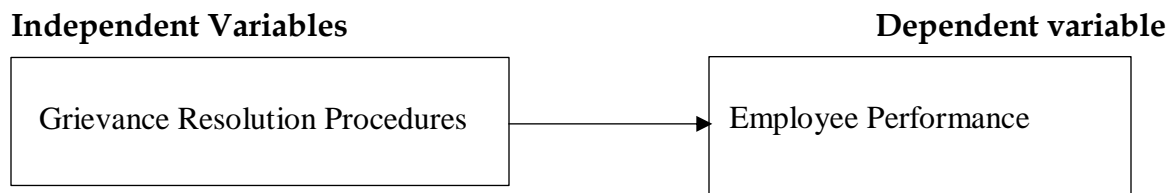


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

OPERATIONALIZATION OF VARIABLES

The process of defining concepts in a way that makes them measurable and observable. This creates a create specific, concrete and measurable indicators that represent the concept being studied. This process is essential in quantitative research to ensure that variables can be measured and analyzed effectively.

Table 2: Operationalization of variables

Variable	Indicators	Measurement
Grievance resolution procedures	Impartiality Investigation Mediation	Likert scale
Employee Performance	Goals and Objectives Work Quality Customer Focus	Likert scale

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A research design is defined as an overall program that guide the research activities in data collection, analysis and reporting of findings (Safavi & Karatepe, 2018). The study adopted a descriptive research design, defined by Vannette (2018), as a methodological approach that aims to systematically describe the characteristics, behaviors, or phenomena under study. The design aided the study in providing a detailed and accurate portrayal of the subject without necessarily establishing cause-and-effect relationships.

Target Population

According to Garaizar & Reips (2019) a target population is an arrangement of individuals, administrations, components, and occasions, gatherings of things or families that are targeted in a study. A total of 3239 employees at the water company of NCWSC was the focus of this study's data gathering.

Table 3: Target Population

Department	Population	Percentage
Commercial Services	803	25%
Company Secretary	6	0%
Financial Services	211	7%
HRM	614	19%
ICT	80	2%
Internal Audit & Risk	8	0%
Managing Director	438	14%
Technical Services	1,063	33%
Total	3,239	100%

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sampling technique is a method used by researchers to select a subset of individuals from a larger population for the purpose of a study (Kothari, 2010). A stratified sampling strategy was employed in the investigation. In stratified sampling, the population was separated into discrete subgroups, or strata, according to certain attributes that were pertinent to the study's goals. In this case, stratification was carried out according to the departments that NCWSC employees are employed. A sample is a subset of individuals selected from a larger population for the purpose of a study. The process of sampling involved systematically selecting individuals or items from the population in such a way that the sample is representative of the population as a whole (Atmowardoyo, 2018). This research applied the Neyman allocation sample formulae in calculating the sample size because it was simple to use. It was as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(c)^2}; \text{ N = Target population; n = Sample size; c = Level of confidence}$$

$$n = \frac{3,223}{1 + 3,223 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3,223}{9.0575}$$

$$n = 356$$

Table 4: Sample size

Department	Population	Percentage
Commercial Services	89	25%
Financial Services	25	7%
HRM	68	19%
ICT	7	2%
Managing Director	50	14%
Technical Services	117	33%
Total	356	100%

Research Instruments

Researchers utilize devices or techniques known as data collection instruments to obtain information from sources or participants for the purpose of analysis or research. These tools are essential to the research process because they allow researchers to gather data in an organized and methodical way. A typical tool for gathering data is the questionnaire (Cooper & Schindler, 2013). A questionnaire is a list of prearranged or written questions intended to elicit particular data from participants. In addition to using a Likert scale of 1 to 5, the questionnaire was split into two sections: section 1 asked questions about demographics and section 2 asked questions about the study variables.

Pilot Study

This was a small-scale exploratory study that was conducted before the main study to determine the feasibility and application of the suggested research approach, according to Dachner, Ellingson, Noe, and Saxton (2021). To make sure the research instruments were valid and dependable for use in the primary research method, a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study was done at Machakos Water and Sewerage Company and involved 10% of the sample size. According to Creswell & Poth (2017) a 10% representation is effective in assessing the feasibility, effectiveness, and potential challenges of the research methods, instruments, or interventions on a smaller scale before committing resources to a larger-scale study.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection procedures refer to the systematic methods and techniques used by researchers to gather information or data for their research studies. These procedures are a critical component of the research process, as they determine how data was collected, recorded, and analyzed (Creswell & Poth, 2017). After proposal defense and authorization to collect data by the supervisor, the researcher obtained a letter from the university for formal authorization, which was then used to obtain a NACOSTI research permit. Questionnaires were administered through paper-based surveys.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis is the process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and interpreting data with the aim of discovering the relationships that exist between study variables. It involves applying statistical techniques to examine data and draw conclusions that support decision-making (Dodds & Hess, 2020). To prepare the data for analysis, the researcher cleaned and sorted the acquired information. The research employed the following methods for data analysis: inferential and descriptive methods. Quantitative techniques were used for data analysis since data was obtained from questionnaires, data was edited for cleanness and coded for easy analysis. The study also adopted two statistics analysis techniques, descriptive and Inferential analysis techniques. Descriptive techniques adopted the use of mean and standard deviation while inferential analysis was included; correlational analysis, model summary, Analysis of variance and Regression analysis using the linear regression model illustrated below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$$

Where;

Y=Employee performance

X₁ = Grievance resolutions

β₀=constant (coefficient of intercept)

β₁... β₄= regression coefficient off our variables the values of " β " called regression weights was computed in a way that minimized sum of squared deviation.

Ethical Consideration

Research Approval

Review board approval was essential, these helped ensure appropriate steps are taken to protect the rights and welfare of respondents in a given study. The study upheld informed consent and ensured that individuals were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits of the project and participation was voluntarily and were asked to fill a consent form.

Anonymity

The questionnaires-maintained anonymity to safeguard the privacy of the participants and to prevent linking the responses to specific individuals. The study guaranteed participants that their involvement was entirely voluntary, and they had the freedom to withdraw at any point. Furthermore, the questionnaires guaranteed anonymity as participants were not required to fill in their personal details to prevent linking the responses to specific individuals.

Confidentiality

Research confidentiality was guaranteed through safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of personal information and research data was secured through encryption. The researcher protected the confidentiality of all the study participants by ensuring that their opinions are respected and findings used only for academic purpose.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Presentation of Findings

Response Rate

The study administered 356 questionnaires to targeted study participants at Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company. The responses from the field are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Response rate

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Filled questionnaires	297	83.4%
Un attended questionnaires	59	16.6%
Total	356	100.0%

As shown in Table 4, 297 employees took part in the study and provided information for further analysis which formed 83.40% of the study participants, while 16.6% of the participants failed to fill administered questionnaires. The response rate was considered to be good enough for data analysis and generalization of study findings.

Reliability

The study carried out a pilot study at the Machakos Water and Sewerage company, 36 employees at the water company engaged in the pilot comprised of 10% of the target population. Findings from this exercise were used to compute the reliability results; Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the study instruments. A higher alpha coefficient indicates greater internal consistency among the items. A Cronbach's alpha score of 0.70 or above was considered suitable for research purposes; however, specific thresholds varied depending on the circumstance. The findings are presented in table 5.

Table 5: Reliability

Construct	N	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision
Employee performance	5	.859	Reliable
Grievance resolution	5	.796	Reliable

As shown in Table 5, Employee performance had an alpha of .859; Grievance resolution had an alpha of .796. All the constructs met the required 0.7 alpha standard; hence it was concluded that the instrument was reliable and consistent in measuring variable relationships. According to Dhillon (2020) an alpha value above 0.7 suggests that the items within the construct are well-correlated and measure the same underlying concept. This means the construct is reliable and the items are consistent in their responses.

Descriptive Results

The study analysed responses given by study participants on statements relating to; Grievance resolution procedure, Open communication, Employee welfare, and Employee involvement. This section analyses responses given by study participants.

Grievance Resolution Procedure

Participants in the study were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with a statement on employee grievance resolution. The table below displays the findings:

Table 6: Grievance Resolution Procedure

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
The management is always impartial when employee conflicts arise	3.794	1.175
Third parties may be involved if parties do not solve their conflict	3.265	1.355
All resolution mechanisms by the company are based on the law	3.371	0.732
Industrial actions is used a last resort when there are failures to resolve disputes	3.647	0.981
Employees grievances are handled by a trade union that effectively fight for their rights	3.556	1.023
Overall Mean	3.5266	

As shown on the table above, statement on: The management is always impartial when employee conflicts arise had a mean of 3.794; third parties may be involved if parties do not solve their conflict had a mean of 3.265; all resolution mechanisms by the company are based on the law had a mean of 3.371; Industrial actions is used a last resort when there are failures to resolve disputes had a mean of 3.647 while statement on employees grievances are handled by a trade union that effectively fight for their rights had a mean of 3.556. On an average mean of 3.5266, study participants moderately agreed that grievance resolution is effective in resolving conflicts at the Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company.

Employee Performance

Participants in the study were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with statement on employee performance at the organization. The findings are presented in the table below:

Table 7: Employee Performance

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
With good relations, employees have been able to meet their goals and objectives	3.14	0.991
Work quality at the company has greatly improved over the years	3.56	1.004
Good employee relations have translated to better customer focus	3.78	.854
Incidents of misunderstanding led to decreased levels of productivity	3.97	.984
Poor relations have a higher bearing on junior employees' performance than on management employee performance	3.71	.876
Overall Mean	3.632	

Based on responses given; With good relations, employees have been able to meet their goals and objectives had a mean of 3.14; Work quality at the company has greatly improved over the years had a mean of 3.56; Good employee relations has translated to better customer focus had a mean of 3.78; Incidents of misunderstanding led to decreased levels of productivity had a mean of 3.97 while statement on poor relations has a higher bearing on junior employees performance than on management employee performance had a mean of 3.71. Based on a mean of 3.632, study participants moderately agreed that employee performance has improved.

Correlational Analysis

Analysis was used to examine the relationship between study variables and determine whether they move together and how strongly they are related. The analysis was used to identify whether an association existed between independent variables and dependent variables. The findings are presented below:

Table 8: Correlation results

Construct		Employee performance	Grievance Resolution
Employee performance	Pearson correlation	1	
	Sig (2-tailed)	-	
Grievance resolution	Pearson correlation	.219	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.008	

As shown in the table above, grievance resolution had a correlation coefficient of .219 and a p-value of .008; The results indicate that there are statistically significant positive connections between employee performance and grievance resolution.

Regression Analysis

Model Summary

In this study, the model summary was taken into account to validate the regression model's suitability for elucidating the relationships among the variables under investigation.

Table 9: Model summary

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-square	Std. error of estimate
1	.7962	.6339	.5902	.6125

Predictors: (Constant); Grievance resolution

According to Table 9, the R-square for coefficient determination is .6339, the research based on factors reveals a correlation of 63.39%, whilst the remaining proportion of 36.61% suggests that not all the employee relation factors influence employee performance.

Analysis of Variance

The goal of the analysis was to determine the model's significance. The resultant value was then compared to the conventional p-value of 0.05.

Table 10: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	39.223	6	6.537	7.014	.018b
Residual	83.876	90	0.932		
Total	123.099	296			

Table 10 shows ANOVA findings that indicate a significant $p < .018$). Employee performance was the dependent variable and employee relations strategies were the predictor variables in a multiple linear model that suited the data well, as indicated by the model's F-value of 7.014.

Regression Analysis Results

The analysis was done to examine the relationships between the study dependent variables and the independent variable. It also enabled the study to quantify the strength and nature of these relationships. The findings are illustrated below:

Table 11: Regression results

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	β	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.874	.251		3.477	.001
Grievance resolution	.187	.079	.190	2.368	.019

$$Y = .874 + .187X_1 + +\epsilon$$

Resolving grievances has a moderately positive effect on employee performance ($\beta = .187$; $p = 0.019$), suggesting that it has a modest but beneficial impact.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher encountered some challenges such as the accessibility of certain key persons with information to the organization, which led to delays in receiving the information on time. They were countered by always having some alternative participants to respond to the questionnaires. Another issue was confidentiality, which was resolved by the university notifying the managers in writing of their intention for the researcher to do the research on the company solely for academic purposes. This made sure the researcher exclusively concentrated on the study area and that confidentiality issues were properly handled. Some responders were unwilling to spend their time filling out the questionnaires. As the researcher, I called the respondents again to reassure them and to remind them to complete the questionnaires so that this study would be successful. Some people differ greatly in their requirements and preferences, such as employees. As a result, the study employed a variety of techniques to be adaptable and take into account the variance in personal circumstances.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Grievance resolution was found to have a moderate positive effect, indicating that resolving grievances contributes positively but modestly to employee performance. Based on the findings, the study concludes that grievance handling procedures have a positive influence on employee performance at Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company. The study recommends that organizations should foster collaboration between key stakeholders, such as employees, management, and labour unions, to create a transparent and structured grievance resolution process. In addition, managers should involve neutral third-party mediators or arbitrators that can provide unbiased perspectives, ensure fairness, and improve trust in the process. The study recommends that further studies should examine the other variables that influence employee performance.

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