

Influence of Leadership Capabilities on Performance of Road Transport Service in Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

Most large cities and rapid growing cities in the world suffer the brunt of chaotic Road Transport Service (RTS). The fast growing city of Nairobi, in Kenya, is experiencing vast challenges in RTS. Unfortunately, the same challenge, of RTS in Nairobi, is slowly creeping in other fast growing urban areas in Kenya. And in spite of multiple interventions like extensive road expansion, mobile courts for traffic offenders, digitalization of traffic lights, and so forth, the RTS still falls short of glory. Empirical work on Public Road Transport Service (PRTS) in Kenya reveals that there has been very little focus on the influence of leadership capabilities on performance of RTS in Kenya. Precisely, this is the research gap that this study strives to fill in. Of all respondents, eighty five point two percent felt that the Public Service Vehicles (PSV) they work for are not well led. Further, ninety two point six percent of respondents felt that PSV managers are highly influential. However, majority of respondents, ninety six point three percent pointed out that, PSV managers receive no praise for achievements made in RTS. These findings indicate that PSV managers can either positively or negatively influence the performance PRTS. Notwithstanding that PSV managers are expected to motivate their employees, PSV manager's motivation levels are extremely low, thus rendering them ineffective in addressing employee motivation needs. Ultimately, leadership matters only insofar as it is influential, and therefore, it is true that highly motivated PSV managers can largely transform the chaotic RTS, in Kenya.

Keywords: *Leadership capabilities:* Human abilities that inspire willing obedience from followers (Adair, 2005).
Motivation: A function of management that helps employees to unleash their abilities (Hersey et al. 2000).
Organizational performance: Results registered by an organization after all required resources are pulled together (Burkus, 2012).

1. Introduction

Road Transport Service (RTS) poses a great challenge to both large cities and rapid growing cities in the world. Exactly like other fast growing cities in the world, the city of Nairobi, is equally threatened by vast challenges in RTS. The same challenge, of RTS in Nairobi, is slowly creeping in other fast growing urban areas like Mombasa and Kisumu (Nduati and Butoyi, 2008). Kenya Ministry of Transport (2012) report affirmed that RTS in the city is Nairobi is in deed chaotic. Apparently, inconsistent bus fares, unreliable bus service, poor safety and security standards, and over-crowded bus termini, are a few things that nauseate Public Service Vehicle (PSV) users in Kenya. Unlike in the developed world where majority of people prefer using Public Road Transport Service (PRTS), in Kenya, the middle and the upper class prefer using personal cars. The assertion is supported by a survey by Kenya Ministry of Transport (2012) which shows that, of all vehicle population in Nairobi, 88 percent comprise of low-capacity vehicles, and only an insignificant 12 percent is high-capacity buses. Further, Kenya Ministry of Transport (2012) study found out that 49 percent of Nairobi residents walk daily, and the rest, 51 percent, an equivalent of 1.5 million people, use vehicle transport. Of those who use vehicle transport, 71 percent use low-capacity cars, 10 percent use high-capacity buses, and the 19 percent use train and motorbikes. Nduati and Butoyi (2008) state that, the city of Nairobi appears to take the brunt of traffic congestion although other major towns in Kenya are gradually heading the same way. On the same, Irandu (2008) observes that the city of Nairobi is experiencing rapid vehicle population, and the future of PRTS, like any other city in the world,

has to begin with human resources. However, it is unfortunate that past researches on PRTS in Kenya, mainly focuses on direct causes of traffic jam, and fails to look at how the paucity of leadership capabilities in PRTS contribute to disorganized RTS in Kenya.

Multiple interventions like road expansion, mobile courts for traffic offenders, digital traffic lights, and so forth, have not yielded remarkable results, so far. So, how can the RTS in Kenya, be transformed? For a long time there has been very little or no focus on cultivating leadership capabilities in management of PSV companies. Precisely refocusing efforts to cultivating leadership capabilities in PSV companies can deliver an attractive RTS, in Kenya. Public Service Vehicles (PSV) in Kenya rarely subject their employees through a rigorous recruitment process in order to determine their suitability for the job. Apparently, PRTS in Kenya is saturated with all manner of people. Hersey et al. (2000) asserts that the golden lining of a successful business is good ethics. To a large extent poor business ethics among PSV employees often repel potential customers who would have opted to leave their personal cars at home and instead use PRTS.

Adair (2005) states that leadership is a key factor in business success-whatever your business and however you define success. Thus the cliché ‘an organization cannot be better than its leadership’ encapsulates the importance of leadership capabilities in performance RTS in Kenya. When businesses thrive, initially the public attributes that success to the prevailing leadership. However, whenever businesses perform poorly, the leadership is overly blamed and sometimes spills over to dismissal or resignation of Chief Executive Officers (CEO’s). Utilization of leadership capabilities can help businesses avert numerous challenges. In deed the assertion that leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth (Burns 1978), emphasizes on the importance of leadership on organizational performance. A ‘Kamba’ saying that, ‘when a herd of cattle lacks a leader, it sleeps outside the homestead’ is an analogy that exudes that leadership is the vital force that largely influences not only performance of any business but also its sustainability. Therefore, the appalling state of RTS in Kenya, calls for keen look at PSV leadership capabilities, now than any other time in history.

Employees play a major role in ensuring that businesses achieve their goals. Therefore, PSV managers should recognize the critical role played by employees in success of business. Businesses that do not adequately address the needs of its employees often fail because quality product is always packaged by quality employees. The first question to ask is how motivated are PSV employees in Kenya? It is easy to think that PSV employees in Kenya are highly motivated since they rarely sleep because of work demands. However, most PSV employees in Kenya receive their wages daily and often they lack job security. How can employees be motivated to work when at the end of every day, they go to sleep fearing that they may not have a job in the following day? Certainly, employees who lack motivation hop from one job to the next, and often they deliver low quality product because they are not focused.

One of the critical competencies of a successful company is its ability to attract and retain the best talents. Armstrong (2006) observes that attraction and retention policies ensure that the organization both gets and keeps the talent it needs. Certainly finding and keeping best talents is critical in scaling up businesses’ competitive advantage. Managers need employees who are mentally and emotionally connected to their jobs, and above all, willing to apply discretionary effort, to make their businesses succeed. However, it is one thing to get the best talent and another thing to keep the talent motivated at the workplace. Admittedly, keeping the best talents motivated is a daunting task largely vested on the leadership. Often motivated PSV managers will keep other employees or followers motivated. As a result, the employees or followers will exhibit unwavering zeal and creativity which will, in turn, make PSV companies register high performance.

Motivation is critical in determining the level of performance of employees, which, in turn, influences how effectively organizational objectives are achieved. In a research on employee motivation, in 1890, William James (as cited in Hersey, et al. 2000) found out that hourly employees could still keep their job

by working at approximately 20 and 30 percent of their ability. On the contrary, highly motivated employees work close to 80 and 90 percent of their ability. It is clear that if employees' motivation is low, employees' performance suffer in as much as if their ability were low. Thus, employee motivation is an extremely critical function in management. This research project aims to determine the influence of motivation on the performance of RTS in Nairobi, Kenya.

2. Method

According to Kothari (2004), a research design is a conceptual structure within which research is conducted. This study used a descriptive research design. The survey was carried out among passenger transport PSV companies in Nairobi. According to Kenya Ministry of Transport (2012) report, passenger transport vehicles in Nairobi comprise of only 19% compared to 81% personal vehicle population. Additionally, out of 38,000 registered PSV in Kenya, 7,000 or 18.42% operate in Nairobi. A descriptive survey design was used for this study since it best describes the magnitude of employee motivation, as a leadership capability that influences the performance of RTS, in Kenya. The study was carried out between March 2013 and December 2013.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), research populations are all subjects possessing a common observable characteristic. Moreover, Kothari (2004) asserts that the target population is the population which the researcher wants to generalize the results of the study. The target population for the study was all PSV companies in Kenya. The accessible population was sixty (60) registered PSV companies operating in the city of Nairobi. A sampling frame comprised of 30% of (60) registered PSV companies operating in Nairobi. Thus the sample was drawn from eighteen (18) 29-54 seat-capacity PSV companies- an equivalent of 30% of registered PSV companies in Nairobi. This study sampled 30% of the accessible population in order to marginally elevate consistency and validity of the research findings. From operational and strategic management areas, two (2) participants were interviewed from each of the eighteen (18) bus companies. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) recommend that 10% of the accessible population is enough sample size for a descriptive survey. The sample size was thirty six (36) participants. The study employed purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques. First, purposive sampling technique was used in identifying eighteen (18) out of sixty (60) PSV companies, operating in Nairobi. Secondly, purposive sampling was again used in identifying and selecting two leadership levels (operational and strategic) in each PSV company, since they represent the characteristics confined in this study. Bryman and Bell (2011) affirm that purposive sampling is appropriate when identifying units that possess appropriate characteristics for the research topic. Finally, simple random sampling was used in picking two (2) participants (one from the operational level and the other from strategic level), from each of the eighteen (18) bus companies. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), simple random sampling minimizes biasness since it gives each sample an equal chance of being identified.

The study collected primary data during this survey. Kothari (2004) describes primary data as those which are collected afresh and for the first time, and thus happen to be original in nature. The primary data was collected through a questionnaire which was hand- delivered to the participants by the researcher. The questionnaire method was the most suitable data collection method since the participants were given enough time to read the questionnaire, understand and give well-thought answers. The questionnaire had a combination of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions had boxes to mark and Likert Type Scale to rank respondents' answers. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) assert that open-ended questions give respondents a better chance for a more detailed response. The questionnaire had 15 questions altogether. Kothari (2004) observes that a questionnaire is more reliable since each statement is given empirical test for discriminating ability. The questionnaire was left with all identified participants, for a period of two weeks, and hereafter the researcher went back to collect the filled-in questionnaire. Distribution, filling-in, and collection of questionnaire was completed within four weeks duration.

3. Discussion

As shown in figure I below, out of 27 respondents of the study, 66.7% said that employee motivation is critically important, 11.1% said it is very important, 7.4% said that it is important, 3.7% said that it is somewhat important, and 11.1% said that employee motivation is not at all important in performance of Road Transport Service (RTS) in Kenya.

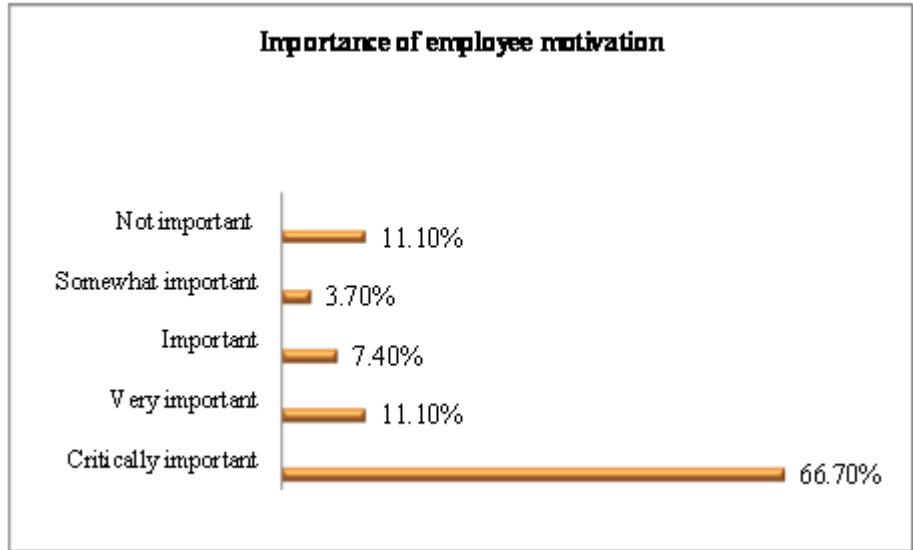


Figure 1: Importance of employee motivation in performance of PSV in Kenya

Apparently, the findings confirm Douglas McGregor’s assumptions about human nature that underlie Theory X and Y; the assertion that people are lazy and do not want to work hence the need to coerce them through threats of punishment or that people are self-directed and creative at work (as cited in Hersey, et al. 2000). And this underlines the importance of employee motivation in understanding the performance of RTS.

Table 1: Managers’ effectiveness in motivating employees

Managers’ effectiveness in motivating employees	Frequency	Percentage
Not effective	21	77.8
Somewhat effective	4	14.8
Effective	2	7.4
Very effective	-	-
Extremely effective	-	-
Total	27	100

Table 1 above, indicates that 77.8% of respondents said that PSV managers are not effective in motivating employees, 14.8% and 7.4% said that PSV managers are somewhat effective and effective, respectively, in motivating employees. Thus vast majority of respondents said that PSV manager’s are not effective in motivating employees, with only a small minority saying that PSV managers are very effective in motivating employees. Clearly, these findings confirm William James 1890 study (as cited in Hersey et al. 2000) that concluded that, employees could still keep their job by working at approximately 20 and 30 percent of their ability. Conclusively, PSV managers do not need to keep their jobs because they are effective; they can work at their least ability and yet maintain their jobs.

Table 2: Manager's motivation levels in PSV

Managers' motivation levels in PSV	Frequency	Percentage
Not at all motivated	21	77.8
Somewhat motivated	3	11.1
Motivated	2	7.4
Very motivated	1	3.7
Extremely motivated	-	-
Total	27	100

Table 2 above, shows motivation levels of PSV managers, in Kenya. 77.8% of respondents said that they are not at all motivated, 11.1% of respondents said that they are somewhat motivated, 7.4% of respondents said that they are motivated, and a small minority of 3.7% said that they are very motivated at work. The findings indicate that vast majority of PSV managers felt that they are not motivated at work. Again, these findings validate William James 1890 conclusions (as cited in Hersey et al. 2000) that, if employees' motivation is low, employees' performance suffer in as smuch as if their ability were low. Therefore, once motivation levels among PSV managers are very low it is unlikely that they will enthusiastically generate plans that will motivate employees, as well as, make RTS in Kenya attractive to majority of road users.

The findings affirm Stinson and Johnson (1975) assertion that the need to feel motivated is deeply ingrained in all employees hence it is important for leaders to motivate employees through out work-life. However, Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Y assumptions on human nature, mainly focuses on lazy subordinate employees as the only people who deserve threats of punishment and fails to extend the same treatment to lazy top managers and directors in organizations.

Table 3: The influence that PSV managers have on performance of RTS

Manager's influence over performance of PSV	Frequency	Percentage
No influence	-	-
Very little influence	-	-
Moderate influence	-	-
Slightly high influence	2	7.4
A lot of influence	25	92.6
Total	27	100

Table 3 above, shows respondent's opinion on how much influence PSV managers have over performance of the RTS. Of all respondents 92.6 % said that PSV managers have a lot of influence, and 7.4% of respondents said that PSV managers have slightly high influence. None of respondents said that PSV managers have no influence over performance of the RTS. These findings confirm Adair (2005) assertion that, leadership matters in so far as it is influential.

Praise that PSV managers get for what gets accomplished in RTS, in Kenya

Table 4 below, shows that 96.3% of respondents felt that PSV managers get no praise for what gets accomplished in RTS, with a small minority of 3.7% feeling that they get very little praise, and none of respondents felt that PSV managers get 'enough praise', 'slightly high praise', or 'too much praise', for what gets accomplished in RTS. Thus huge percentage of respondents felt that PSV managers' efforts are not proportionally appreciated by their employers.

Table 4: Praise that PSV managers get for what gets accomplished in the RTS

Praise that PSV manager' get for RTS performance	Frequency	Percentage
No praise	26	96.3
Very little praise	1	3.7
Enough praise	-	-

Slightly high praise	-	-
Too much praise	-	-
Total	27	100

Table 5: Based on your observation, is the PSV that you work for well-led?

Is the PSV that you work for well-led?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	4	14.8
No	23	85.2
Total	27	100

As shown in table 5 above, vast majority of respondents, 85.2% felt that the PSV they work for is not well-led. A small minority, 14.8% , felt that the PSV they work for is not well-led. The findings confirm that PSV in Kenya have insufficient leadership, hence the need to describe how employee motivation, as a leadership capability influences the performance of RTS, in Kenya.

4. Conclusions

The findings indicate that vast majority of respondents felt that PSV they work for are not well led, and yet PSV managers are highly influential in performance of RTS, in Kenya. Also, vast majority of respondents felt that managers receive no praise for achievements made in RTS, in Kenya. Incommensurate praise for achievements in PSV, to a large extent, may curtail the effectiveness of PSV managers in creating a highly performing RTS, in Kenya. These findings blatantly acknowledge that employee motivation, as a leadership is highly influential in achieving organizational objectives, thus confirming Adair (2005) assertion that, leadership matters in so far as it is influential.

Notwithstanding latest unwarranted efforts to sanitize RTS in Kenya, like introduction of mobile courts for traffic offenders, installation of free WIFI and launch of moneyless payment system in some PSV, the PRTS in Kenya, like in some places in the world, largely remains an alternative for the poor (Vigar, 2002). Thus the question, what can be done to create a glorious RTS in Kenya, has remained elusive even after numerous interventions by different stakeholders. Unfortunately, some outsiders who claim to have the solution to challenges facing RTS often look at advancing their selfish goals like rigging to be awarded tenders and unfairly outwitting their competitors. Despite the fact that the problem of undesirable passenger transport affects all road users, it is essential that the RTS stakeholders realize that the best solution to the problems bedeviling the RTS largely resides within the PRTS leadership.

There is no doubt that absence of professional management team is a common trend in many PSV, in Kenya. The study endorses that the chaotic state of the RTS is a reflection of absence of employee motivation, as a leadership capability in RTS in Kenya. In deed lack of motivation among PSV managers prevents them from unleashing potentials necessary to create an admirable RTS, in Kenya. Certainly, the importance of motivation as a critical leadership capability in building a highly reputable RTS, in Kenya, is unquestionable. In deed the high level of influence of PSV managers on RTS can be employed in transforming the RTS since leadership only matters in so far as it remains influential (Adair, 2005). Surveying current professionals in PRTS management can highlight why RTS is not ‘a great place to work’. Ultimately, further research on passenger experience with PRTS employees can help policy makers to come up with regulations that would protect passengers from some ruthless PSV employees, as well as, design advocacy programs that can help both PSV employees and their customers to know how to interact with each other.

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