

## Firm Agile Human Resource and Organizational Performance: A Case Study of the NOREB Counties, Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The purpose of the study was to assess the agile human resource and organizational performance: A case of the NOREB Counties, Kenya. The research questions of the study were; what is the relationship between agile sensitivity training and organizational performance of NOREB Counties? How does agile organizational culture management relate to the organizational performance of NOREB Counties? What is the relationship between agile management level of interactions and organizational performance at NOREB Counties? What is the relationship between agile HR Policy and organizational performance at NOREB Counties? A correlational research design was used to assess the relationship between the variables.

**Approach/Methodology/Design:** The study targeted 1129 respondents. The sample size for the study was 285 respondents. The study employed multistage sampling. Questionnaires were used as the main data collection instruments but were supported by interview schedules. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the responses and multiple regression was used to analyze the data inferentially.

**Findings:** The results of multiple regressions, that Agile Sensitivity Training had no significant relationship ( $p = 0.080$ ), agile organizational culture management had a significant relationship ( $p = 0.000$ ), and agile management level of interactions style had no significant relationship ( $p = 0.065$ ) and agile human resource policy had a significant relationship ( $p = 0.000$ ) at 5 percent confidence with Organizational Performance.

**Originality/value:** The study concluded that content in sensitivity training needs to be relevant and current to assist solve organizational problems. That, there is need for good teamwork and cooperation in the organization as a way to enhance agile organizational culture. Further, management needs to provide the required budgets to support HR programs. The HR policy includes and emphasizes on HR training. The study recommended need for HR policy to transform HR operations to be more Agile.

### INTRODUCTION

Cappelli and Tavis (2018) claim that Human Resource (HR) is redefining how businesses hire, train, and manage their employees in order to follow the agility trend. According to Denning (2016), "agile management is now a significant global movement that is changing the workplace. Agile is an approach that emphasizes continuous process improvement to maximize customer value while minimizing waste, according to a broad definition (Teich and Faddoul, 2018). Agile adoption necessitates commitment to change at various organizational levels, going far beyond using tools and redesigning processes to include culture, mindset, structures,

and information flows. It also calls for very different roles and skills for leaders, teams, and individual employees (Rigby, Elk and Perez, 2020). (Muduli, 2018). Agility can be defined as being active, responsive, swift, and flexible.

Agile HR is the practice of operating the HR function according to agile principles (McMackin, & Heffernan, 2021). Agile HR organizes the HR function into interdisciplinary, empowered teams that continuously align with changing business demands by sensing and adapting via open communication while functioning in short cycles in order to reduce waste and maximize the flow of value to its customers. All facets of the HR operation, including the structures, roles, procedures, and tools as well as the knowledge and conduct of HR management and HR staff, are influenced by agile principles. A proper people strategy and a shift in how employers interact with employees are crucial success factors in the implementation of a new agile corporate culture, despite the fact that HR is one of the areas that frequently lags behind in agile transformation (ochová, 2019). Self-guided work teams should be supported and encouraged by human resource organizations because they are a relatively new idea and very effective in management (Nawaz & Gomes, 2020).

Benefits of changing an HR strategy include better support for agile teamwork, increased employee engagement and development (Gieles & van der Meer, 2017), improved knowledge management practices (Tenório et al., 2020), a more effective continuous learning environment (Dingsyr et al., 2020), more effective talent acquisition (Nawaz & Gomes, 2020), and performance management (ochová, 2019). According to Gieles & van der Meer (2017), the goal of human resource management is to support employees' engagement and personal growth; to inspire them to embrace change and adapt when necessary; to assist in the development of autonomous, self-managing, and collaborative teams; to support teams' motivation and capabilities; to hone employees' various strengths and talents; and to assist in the creation of the environments necessary for excellent performance.

There are very few empirical studies connecting Agile HR to organizational success, particularly in the setting of the developing world. The level of an organization's success in attaining its goals and objectives is known as organizational performance (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2019). According to Cascio (2015), an organization's performance is determined by how well it keeps the commitments it has made to its stakeholders. The workforce is referred to as the entire group of individuals employed by a firm (Hornby, 2017). The HR department's job is to support the hiring, development, and retention of people who want to work in an agile environment and incorporate components of agility into their daily work if the organization's corporate culture supports agile management. These have the goal of improving organizational performance.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Huynh and Petrunia (2010) in this paper author describe the study of some determinant such as leverage, age and size of the firms in firm growth. The methodology use for this data is a unique administrative data set because small firms and also private firms have not much more information about financial data. Researcher also gathers this information through General Index of Financial Information (GIFI).

Cole and Sokolyk (2017) in this research researcher discuss the study of financial leverage on the start-up firm's growth. This study examines that Information collect through The Kauffman Firm Survey (KFS). Mostly new start-up Firms depends on the debt to generate more revenue

and Employment. New generated firms have lack of informational data so they mostly focus on debt Financing.

Gamlath (2019) This study examines the impact of financial leverage on business growth using data from Twenty (20) Sri Lankan Publicly traded enterprises over a five year period from 2013-2017. This study examines the Firms growth in terms of sales and profit. Financial leverage is evaluated in term of total debt to total assets growth whereas total assets growth is assessed in terms of assets growth. According to this analysis there is a considerable positive correlation between TDTE and enterprise growth. In addition, the finding reveals the financial leverage has a considerable impact on corporate performance. As a result financial leverage has a discovered favorable impact on business growth.

Iqbal and Usman (2018) the goal of this study is to determine the link between financial leverage and the performance of Pakistani Textile Composite Companies. The Textile Composite Companies of Pakistan that are listed on the PSX (100-index) have been chosen. Data over the past five years has been gathered. The top 16 organizations were chosen as a sample from 2011 to 2015. Making use of descriptive language the findings will be determined using statistics, correlation analysis, and a regression model. According to additional research, the value of equity is reduced by a high interest rate and a larger debt load. Financial leverage has a beneficial influence on a business. According to the studies, if the debts do not above the equity, the achievement will be good.

Hamouri, Al-Rdaydeh and Ghazalat (2018) in this paper author study about financial leverage that how much financial leverage effect on firms growth. Collect information from 91firms of Jordon through Penal Data Regression Method study taken between 2006 to 2015. Financial leverage has a positive correlation between sales growth and employment. Jordanian enterprise is not constrained according to speculator.

Javadi, Alimoradi and Ashtiani (2017) the relevance of financial variables as factors of business growth has been reported in recent concepts of firm economics. The majority of technical literature indicates that financial leverage and company performance are positively related. The goal of this research is to see if such a link exists within the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) occurs among oil and gas firms (OPEC). The information was gathered from the individuals who are members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The data was then evaluated using the GMM approach and the Sargan test developed by Arellano and Bond (1991). Financial leverage and corporate performance have a strong and favorable link. This study adds to the corpus of knowledge by focusing on a specific and important area across numerous nations. It demonstrates that industry or nation have no influence on the existing concept.

H<sub>1</sub>=Financial leverage has a significant positive impact on firm growth of textile sector.

H<sub>2</sub>=Financial leverage has a significant positive impact on firm growth of textile sector in a post CPEC scenario.

## **Problem Statement**

Ideally, In Kenya, the county governments are envisioned to bring services closer to the people. To achieve these results the human resource in the county is a key component to facilitate this (King, Khor, Hew, Leong, & Ooi, 2018). Performance challenges in the counties reported in past studies include, high levels of absenteeism averaged at about 37% annually, and low speeds by county governments to address development issues for residents. For example in 27 sampled counties, project completion is always 2 years to 3 years late for projects scheduled to be completed. There are numerous reports on low-quality services offered by the county staff

where 49% of respondents were interviewed for example in a survey by Kundu, and Mor (2017) noting that over 3 to 4 visits are necessary to the county offices to have a service offered to completion by residents (Kathimba & Anyieni, 2018).

These challenges are not unique to any county in Kenya. Efforts have been made to manage these challenges through a number of strategies but there have been indications that these practices have not yielded expected performance results. For example, in most counties' budgets, funds have been allocated for a number of training sessions over the last few years to sensitive employees or various work issues but still, there are reported performance challenges.

## **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions

1. What is the relationship between agile sensitivity training and organizational performance of NOREB Counties?
2. How does agile organizational culture management relate to organizational performance of NOREB Counties?
3. What is the relationship between agile management Level of Interactions and organizational performance at NOREB Counties?
4. What is the relationship between agile HR Policy and organizational performance at NOREB Counties?

## **Literature Review**

Agile HR places less emphasis on seeking perfection and more emphasis on experimentation, learning from mistakes, testing pilot projects, creating self-directed teams, and completing the work more quickly. This is in contrast to traditional human resource management, which involves comprehensive personnel work (Nawaz & Gomes, 2020). Talent management is given a lot of attention. Working with people requires an agile approach to managing the entire organization and a cooperation between business and HR. The longer-term objective is to become the employer of choice for aspiring employees. Agile HR methods must be well-received by employees, who make up a large portion of the workforce.

Through the following values, collaborative networks over hierarchical structures; transparency over secrecy; adaptability over prescriptiveness; inspiration and engagement over management and retention; intrinsic motivation over extrinsic rewards; ambition over obligation—the authors of the Manifesto for Agile HR Development (2017) are learning better ways to create an engaging workplace culture. Additionally, there are a lot of significant contrasts between traditional and agile HR. To ensure a prompt and adaptable response to the needs of the business, it is first imperative to emphasize the planning and organizational aspects of the HR team's work. To develop and sustain the talents required for the company's performance, human resources processes and structures should be implemented (Revutska, & Maršíková, 2021).

According to an agile model, leadership and accountability for people transfer from human resources (HR) to specific managers and, depending on the maturity of the teams, maybe even to the teams themselves (Gieles & van der Meer, 2017). An agile method of working enables the talent acquisition process to be continuously adjusted to the rapidly changing labor market (Nawaz & Gomes, 2020). The modern corporate climate is characterized by extremely quick technology advancements, with an emphasis on innovation, fierce rivalry, and digitalization. In this setting, an employee's capacity for learning new abilities, speedy adaptation to change, and corporate culture take precedence over a particular set of skills at a given time (Ochoa, 2019).

Competencies are required due to working in self-organizing teams where learning is a constant process. However, personal characteristics and motivation are becoming more significant (Gieles & van der Meer, 2017). Unlike competencies, these are exceedingly difficult to modify. Therefore, it is essential to focus less on knowledge and abilities and more on luring people who have the proper motivation and personal attributes. It is crucial to consider specific norms, values, and personality traits in relation to the job specification and the internal and external organizational contexts when choosing new coworkers who must require new individual competencies (Junita, 2021).). According to Kavitha & Suresh, (2021), the abilities required in the workforce will be slightly more about the capacity to handle emotions and engage with the social environment than they will be about human intelligence. Additionally, alignment between the candidate's values and the organization's vision is required.

HR is constantly coming up with innovative ways to improve the services offered. Agile professionals prioritize their jobs and enhance workflow by applying the lean and agile concepts. Adopting agile throughout human resources could help the team work together and support effective decision-making so that the stakeholders' needs are met with the least amount of delay and bureaucracy possible (Nawaz & Gomes, 2020).

### **Theoretical Review – Resource-Based Perspective**

According to the resource-based paradigm, sustained competitive advantage results from utilizing organizational resources that are valuable, uncommon, difficult to duplicate, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). The Resource Based View is highly helpful in agile research, for instance, to identify the essential resources required to accomplish the intended technical (operational and financial performance) and social outcomes (better attitudes of employees) results (Danese, 2018). The Resource Based View (RBV) emphasizes that a total commitment to agile is necessary to get the full benefits of adopting it in the context of agile HR as an HR operational strategy.

For instance, RBV emphasizes how adopting agile tools like sprints or Kanban is extremely imitable and thus unable to produce a sustained competitive advantage. However, a fully integrated agile HR operating strategy that incorporates agile tools and methodologies as well as the abilities, responsibilities, and behaviors of employees and managers is incomparable and can generate a sustained competitive advantage. The emphasis on managers' roles in resource deployment to create competitive advantage in more recent developments of the RBV to include Resource Orchestration (see Sirmon, Hitt, Ireland, and Gilbert, 2011, for a review) is particularly pertinent in this context.

Resource management is described as "the whole process of structuring, combining, and leveraging the organization's resources with the objective of providing value for consumers and competitive advantages for the firm" by Sirmon, Hitt, and Ireland (2007). (p. 1392). When executing HR operational strategy, resource orchestration focuses on how HR managers' decisions might influence the creation of competitive advantage from potentially valuable resources (McKinsey, 2019). Therefore, we emphasize both the behavioral and technological aspects of agile implementation in the concept of "Agile for HR" that follows.

## **METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES**

A correlational research design was used to assess the relationship between the variables. The study targeted the employees working in NOREB counties. The employees in the 8 counties consisted of Top and Middle Level Management were represented by Chief Officers while the

middle management were the directors and heads of sections of different departments. The study targeted 1129 respondents.

The sample size for the study was 285 respondents (Krejcie and Morgan Formulae (1970)).

**Table 1: Sample Size**

| Respondents      | Target Population | Procedure        | Sample Size |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------|
| CECs             | 80                | 80/1129 * 285    | 20          |
| Chief Officers   | 134               | 134 / 1129 * 285 | 34          |
| Directors        | 341               | 341/ 1129 * 285  | 86          |
| Heads of Section | 552               | 552 / 1129 * 285 | 139         |
| Supervisors      | 102               | 102 / 1129 * 285 | 26          |
| Total            | 1129              |                  | 285         |

Source: Author's data (2022)

The sample size for the study was 285 respondents. The study employed a stratified sampling method to achieve the desired sample sizes from the various sub-sets in the population. Purposive sampling was employed to pick the management staff from the respective departments in the county to ensure that all the departments in the county government are represented. The questionnaire was issued to middle-level staff working in the various departments who are the directors and the heads of sections. The interview schedule was issued to the heads of departments in the various departments and a different set of interview schedules to customers selected to participate in the study. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the responses and multiple regression and hierarchical regression were to analyze the data inferentially. Thematic analysis was used to analyze interview responses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

A total of 285 structured questionnaires were distributed to employees from the eight NOREB counties. Out of the 285 questionnaires, 194 questionnaires were filled and returned. This represented 68.07 percent response rate. This response rate is considered satisfactory to make conclusions for the study.

### Descriptive Summary

#### Agile Sensitivity Training and Organizational Performance

Overall findings indicated that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that content in agile sensitivity training is relevant and current to assist solve organizational problems, followed by opinions that sensitivity training is conducted together with the general training of other organizational issues.

#### Agile Organizational Culture Management and Organizational Performance

Findings indicated that a majority of the respondents were of the opinion that there is good team work and cooperation in the organization, followed by opinions that employees are allowed to implement policies or work practices and that management encourages sharing of information.

#### Agile Management Level of Interactions style on Organizational Performance

Results indicated a majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the management provides required budgets to support HR programs, followed by the opinion that management has developed policies to help manage HR issues. Finally, management actions including

supervision show a positive attitude by management to diversify management, management provides interventions to correct cultural diversity practices.

### Agile Human Resource Policy and Organizational Performance

Overall the study findings indicated that majority the of the respondents were of the opinion that HR policy implementation can be rated above-average followed by the opinion that Employment policy restricts and guides hiring practices on a strict basis.

### Regression Results

The regression results give an outline of all the findings in terms of goodness of fit model summary, regression coefficients of the variables to give the contribution of each variable towards organizational performance, and then, ANOVA to test for significance. All these are done and discussed per variable.

The multiple regression coefficients the coefficient of determination, R<sup>2</sup> is the measure of the amount of variability in one variable that is explained by the other (Field, 2005). To find out how well the model fits well in generalizing the results, the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is used since it gives an idea of how well the model fits. The value of adjusted R<sup>2</sup> should be as close to the value of R<sup>2</sup>. The goodness of fit model presented in table 2 involves Agile Human Resource Practices as the only independent variable. The outcome was the coefficient of determination (R square) of .579.

This indicated that the model explained only 57.9 percent of the variation or change in the dependent variable. The remaining proportion of 42.1 percent can be explained by other factors other than the independent variables. Adjustment of the R square did not change the results substantially, having reduced the explanatory behavior of the predictor from 57.9 percent to 57.0 percent. This means that the model is fit to be used to generalize the findings.

**Table 2: Model Summary<sup>c</sup>**

| Model Summary   |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model   | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1   | .761 <sup>a</sup> | 0.579    | 0.570             | 0.34307                    |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Agile Human Resource Policy, Agile Sensitivity Training, Agile Management Level of Interactions, Agile Organizational Culture Management |                   |          |                   |                            |

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) or the Goodness of Fit test measures that the data used to compute the regression model has not been computed by chance. The results with a p-value of 0.000 being less than 0.05, indicate that the model is statistically significant indicating that the model has not been computed by chance.

**Table 3: Goodness of Fit Test Results**

| ANOVA <sup>b</sup> / Goodness of Fit Test  |            |                |     |             |        |      |
|--|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
|  | Model      | Sum of Squares | Df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
| 1  | Regression | 30.628         | 4   | 7.657       | 65.058 | .000 |
|  | Residual   | 22.244         | 189 | 0.118       |        |      |
|  | Total      | 52.872         | 193 |             |        |      |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Agile Human Resource Policy, Agile Sensitivity Training, Agile Management Level of Interactions , Agile Organizational Culture Management |            |                |     |             |        |      |

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Table 4. presents the regression results of Agile Human Resource Practices and Organizational Performance at KFS. With a constant (p-value = 0.000) of 0.350, the study concluded that even without Agile Human Resource Practices, employees seemed to display some form of Organizational Performance with or without a moderator.

Nonetheless, the coefficient of 0.077 indicated the extent to which a unit change in agile sensitivity training caused a change in organizational performance. In this case, a unit change in agile sensitivity training leads to 7.7% units of positive change in organizational performance of employees at NOREB Counties.

The coefficient of 0.299 indicated the extent to which a unit change in agile organizational culture management caused a change in Organizational Performance. In this case, a unit change in agile organizational culture management leads to a 29.9% of positive change in the organizational performance of employees at NOREB Counties.

The coefficient of 0.147 indicated the extent to which a unit change in the agile management level of interactions caused a change in organizational performance. In this case, a unit change in the agile management level of interactions leads to 14.7% units of positive change in organizational performance of employees at NOREB Counties.

The coefficient of 0.388 indicated the extent to which a unit change in agile human resource policy caused a change in organizational performance. In this case, a unit change in agile human resource policy leads to 38.8% units of positive change in organizational performance of employees at NOREB Counties.

Therefore, the Agile Human Resource Practices and Organizational Performance model can be presented as follows:

$$Y = 0.350 + 0.077X_1 + 0.299X_2 + 0.147X_3 + 0.388X_4 + 0.275 (\text{error})$$

**Table 4: Agile Human Resource Practices on Organizational Performance**

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup>               |                             |            |                           |       |      |
|---|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Model                                   | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig. |
|   | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |
| (Constant)                              | 0.35                        | 0.275      |                           | 1.273 | 0.20 |
| Agile Sensitivity Training              | 0.077                       | 0.044      | 0.097                     | 1.758 | 0.08 |
| Agile Organizational Culture Management | 0.299                       | 0.049      | 0.374                     | 6.124 | 0.00 |
| Agile Management Level of Interactions  | 0.147                       | 0.079      | 0.109                     | 1.857 | 0.06 |
| Agile Human Resource Policy             | 0.388                       | 0.062      | 0.364                     | 6.264 | 0.00 |

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

**Tests of Hypotheses**

The study sought to test the hypothesis in the study and the results were presented.

**Ho1: There is no significant effect between Agile Sensitivity Training and Organizational Performance**



The results of multiple regressions, as presented in Table 4 indicate that Agile Sensitivity Training had no significant relationship ( $p = 0.080$ ) at 5 percent confidence with Organizational Performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore there is no significant effect of Agile Sensitivity Training and Organizational Performance.

### **H02: There is no significant effect between Agile Organizational Culture Management and Organizational Performance**

The results of multiple regressions, as presented in Table 4 indicate that agile organizational culture management had a significant relationship ( $p = 0.000$ ) at 5 percent confidence with organizational performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate not rejected which was that there is a significant relationship between agile organizational culture management and organizational performance. Therefore there is a significant effect of agile organizational culture management and organizational performance.

### **H03: There is no significant effect of Agile Management Level of Interactions style on Organizational Performance.**

The results of multiple regressions, as presented in Table 4 indicate that agile management level of interactions style had no significant relationship ( $p = 0.065$ ) at 5 percent confidence with organizational performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore there is no significant effect of agile management level interactions and organizational performance.

### **H04: There is no significant effect between Agile Human Resource Policy and Organizational Performance.**

The results of multiple regressions, as presented in Table 4 indicate that agile human resource policy had a significant relationship ( $p = 0.000$ ) at 5 percent confidence with organizational performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate not rejected which was that there is a significant relationship between agile human resource policy and organizational performance. Therefore there is a significant effect of human resource policy and organizational performance

## **Discussion**

Study findings indicated that content in agile sensitivity training is relevant and current to assist solve organizational problems. Wharton (2015) supported that content of sensitivity training need to be relevant by noting that the effect of training courses is usually difficult to measure because of what researchers call demand or social desirability effects. People give the answers they think are expected or which make them look better. The Wharton research found that content of training had a significantly positive effect on employees' attitudes to female colleagues. Their attitudes to gender parity improved markedly compared with the control group.

The study findings indicated that there is good team work and cooperation in the organization as a way to enhance agile organizational culture management. Bururu (2015) supported these findings by noting that training should not only be mandatory for lower-level workers. All employees, regardless of their status in the company, can and should benefit from the sessions. All employees must participate, including senior executives.

Study findings were of the opinion that the management provides the required budgets to support HT programs. Geshu (2013) notes that the major hindrances to HR training programs can also be traced to the lack of management commitment, especially in terms of their failure to provide budgets to conduct the agile sensitivity training. Agile sensitivity training requires a considerable amount of resources including the hiring of venues, trainers, and other

expenditures associated with the diversity training session process. Consequently, there is a need to look at the most effective ways in which the diversity management training programs can be conducted while incorporating management support to ensure that required resources are available.

The study findings indicated that Agile HR policy implementation can be rated on an above-average scale. The HR policy includes an emphasis on organizational agility. Johnson (2016) supported these findings by noting that there is a significant impact from policies and practices in human resources over HR, and the evidence is that only professional involvement exhibited significant relation.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The study concluded that content in sensitivity training needs to be relevant and current to assist solve organizational problems. That there is a need for good teamwork and cooperation in the organization as a way to enhance agile organizational culture management, which promotes employee performance. Further, management needs to provide the required budgets to support HR programs, and HR policy implementation is good in most county offices. The HR policy includes and emphasizes HR training.

The study made the following research recommendations; there is a need for human resource planning to develop a policy that ensures that there is regular and frequent agile sensitivity training. There is also a need for the human resource department to develop policies stipulating the required agile organizational culture. This will define the conduct expected of the employees at the county offices. The aim of this will be to foster an agile organizational culture that accommodates all the different diversities of workforces. There is need for policy to involve management in dealing with HR issues.

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