Influence of Structural Empowerment on Job Performance in National Polytechnics in Kenya

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Abstract

Structural empowerment can be defined as an administration process where employees access resources and information as well as participate in organisational decision-making. It is described as access to opportunities and access to information in this study. There is an upsurge attention in utilizing the knowledge sources in an organization lately, to arouse invention among the employees. Structural employee empowerment also refers to cultivation of a working environment to enable employees participate in goal setting, problem solving and decision making. This study examined the influence of structural empowerment on job performance in National Polytechnics in Kenya. The dependent variable in this study was considered as structural empowerment while job performance was considered as the dependent variable. The target population consisted of 2993 staff from the ten National Polytechnics in Kenya. The study employed cross-sectional descriptive survey research design. Disproportionate stratified sampling was used in selecting the 337 respondents. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Validity was established by obtaining experts' verification and pretesting. Pilot study was also conducted. To determine the document's reliability, Cronbach's alpha score was computed, realizing a score of 0.722. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used. Regression analysis was used to establish the influence of structural empowerment on job performance. 302 valid questionnaires were returned out of the 337 questionnaires issued translating to 89.6 % response rate. The study established that structural empowerment significantly influences job performance. Data was presented in tables and figures. It was anticipated that by understanding the influence of structural empowerment, managers would design programmes applying effective empowerment plans. The study was considered beneficial in policy making to the government, the National Polytechnics managements, the staff and the public. It would offer literature for further research as well as contribute to knowledge.

1. Introduction

There has been a growing concern lately regarding employee attraction, retention and motivation. Organisations are struggling to retain their talented staff and improve on their profits. Structural empowerment refers to allowing employees have support, opportunities, information and rewards for development of an organisation [10]. Access to information implies availing necessary information to employees to strengthen their awareness and confidence of their organization's state [1]. Access to opportunities such as promotion, training and development is vital to empowerment among others.

the National Polytechnics in Kenya are aimed at having a well skilled workforce, which is vital in enabling the country to achieve its 'Big Four Agenda' which includes affordable housing, food security, manufacturing and universal healthcare as well as in achieving sustainability, aimed at ensuring equitable, inclusive and quality education as well as promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2015). Education in Kenya is classified into three distinct levels: University, TVET basic education which covers primary and secondary education (Sessional paper no 1, 2005). Only ten out five hundred and forty Technical Vocational Education and Training Institutions in Kenya are of national status and are known as National Polytechnics (NP). They include Eldoret, Kisii, Kabete, Kisumu, Kitale, North Eastern Province, Meru, Mombasa (renamed Kenya Coast National Polytechnic), Nyeri, and Sigalagala [20].

Employee performance in TVET institutions is not satisfactory and is partly attributed to employees' tendency to have lower income and status than employees in higher education or similarly skilled workers in the private sector, making them feel inferior and affecting their performance. Although, the government of Kenya has organised many employee empowerment programmes such as improved rewards and training and development opportunities service delivery in TVET institutions has not been satisfactory [14]. NPs in Kenya have experienced high staff turnover which affects their service delivery. Organisations are unable to implement empowerment fully due to bureaucracy, which encourages dependency, obedience, traditions and rules that outline what and how is to be done, thus suppressing discretions and initiatives (15, 48). Recent research has shown that these policies are not or are partially implemented, despite including empowerment, thus affecting employee performance. Researchers are looking for ways that organizations can use to satisfy their customers, retain their employees, enhance productivity and increase employee loyalty. While empowerment is expected to improve employee performance as indicated by some researchers [9], others have observed negative effects such as stress and costs on the organisations as a result of empowerment [11]. Studies regarding empowerment have mainly been done in developed countries while only a few have been done in the developing countries. Few studies have been carried out in Kenya's public and education sectors, despite education being one of the major sectors anticipated to lead the country towards accomplishing its goals. This study therefore looks at the influence of structural empowerment on job performance.

This study was founded on the Kanter's Structural Organizational Empowerment Theory [8:1141]. He asserts that the setting of organisational work is a significant link between employees' conducts and attitude in organizations and that power and opportunity access explain the employees' attitudes and actions. The theory was considered relevant to the study as it had considered some variable indicators adopted in this study.

Structural empowerment sources embraced access to organizational opportunities, resources, support and information [18:29]. Access to resources is the ability to obtain vital provisions, monies and human resource needed to meet the goals of an organization. Structural empowerment and job satisfaction have a strong correlation (Wong & Laschinger, 2013). Structural empowerment comprises of policies, framework and other factors which influence behavior and focus on the contextual circumstances that cause workplace empowerment. Structural empowerment is the process of sharing power and delegation of responsibility in an organizational hierarchy. Empowerment is a key enabler to positive change [25:318]. Access to opportunities such as promotion, training and development is vital to empowerment among others.

Information sharing is a significant part of organizational culture that contributes to employees' empowerment. When an organization shares information with its employees, it grants them a higher degree of empowerment. Sharing information inspires the employees' yearning to perform well in their jobs. Researchers are in agreement that empowered employees are able to deal with workplace exhaustion easily, are highly satisfied, are more efficient and are less susceptible to negative behaviour at work [17]. Most often employees attribute inadequate support from their seniors as the reason for their poor performance [17].

A study carried out in China revealed that when supervised by a leader who has a high self-awareness, employees have a tendency to share information and reveal their thoughts and feelings. They are able to do more for their organizations to attain their potential [28]. It was noted that managers lack sufficient time to guide their employees, as they have to spend most of their time monitoring the environment in and outside the organization leaving everyday jobs to the employees although empowerment was established to be a useful instrument for managers. This was established in a study done in the Greater Tehran branches of Mehr Eghtesad Bank on the empowerment's influence on self-worth of the employees [16:1434].

A study carried out in Tunisia observed that empowerment can improve performance if well managed by employee's self-determination and involvement intensifying [2]. This agrees with researchers such as [15:53]. who note that empowerment is a result of organizational performance. Empowerment enhances responsibilities and motivates employees in their work; improves quality of their services, levels of satisfaction, employees' productivity and loyalty. Employee empowerment leads to improved performance and enhances the quality of service offered [8].

Empowerment comes with many advantages for the organisations such as improved teamwork and communication, quick responses to customers, employees' participation in own goals creation; improved employee contribution; better reverence among employees; reduced absenteeism; better productivity; more satisfying work; reduced conflicts among employees and decreased company cost due to reduced middle management positions [4]. Managers should be sensitive to the employees' goals, the organisations' goals as well as know the best management styles to use to achieve the desired outcomes [4].

Studies have emphasized on the application of Kanter's structural empowerment theory in the Nursing profession [10]. The present globalization and developments have realized the necessity of application of Kanter's theory in other economy sectors, although during the conceptualization of the Kanter's theory, the

health practitioners especially nurses were given priority. Structural empowerment characteristics such as access to opportunities and information are crucial for the accomplishment of any employee regardless of their profession, area of work or industry.

According to [19], the conceptual framework looks at the variables used in the study and are divided into simple and complex conceptual framework categories. The independent variable of this study is structural empowerment. [14] Conducted a study on influence of empowerment on organizational commitment in Kenya civil service with psychological and structural empowerment as the constructs. The independent variable in this study was structural empowerment whose constructs include access to opportunities, and information; Employee performance, the dependent variable in the study, was considered as quality of work done and dependability as shown in figure 1.
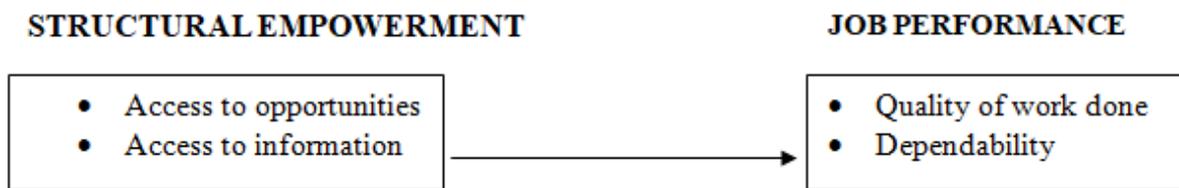
STRUCTURAL EMPOWERMENT　　　　　　　　**JOB PERFORMANCE**

- Access to opportunities
- Access to information

- Quality of work done
- Dependability

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of structural empowerment on job performance in National Polytechnics in Kenya.

2. Materials and methods

Research design is the logical organisation of factors in order to combine economic implication and relevance of research purpose for easy interpretation [27].

Research design guides the research process from formulation of the research questions and hypotheses to reporting the findings [22:131]. The study used descriptive research and regression research designs. Descriptive research explores and describes something as it is (13,2).

The research design is a valid method for researching specific subjects and gives an accurate profile of a group. Correlation research design was also used, a process in which scores of subjects on two variables are measured, to investigate whether a relationship exists. It is a statistical method used in assessing the existence and strength of relationships. These research designs therefore qualify to give the results of this study.

The target population of this study consisted of the 1214 staff of the National Polytechnics.

Population implies all items in an area of inquiry (13,14). The researcher used disproportionate stratified sampling to select 337 Employees. A confidence level of 95%, standard normal deviate value of 1.96 and margin of error of 5% (0.05) were assumed and considered acceptable. Sample sizes of the respondents to be selected are as shown in table 1

Table 1: Sample Size.

National Polytechnic	Pop (N_i)	Teaching staff	s_i	Non-teaching staff	s_i	Sample (n_i) Teaching staff	Sample (n_i) Non-teaching staff	Total Sample
Eldoret	501	234	12	267	10	24	70	94
Kisii	319	216	13	103	1	23	1	25
Kabete	395	255	12	140	3	25	10	36
KCNP	267	196	14	71	4	22	8	31
Kisumu	299	196	14	103	1	22	1	24
Kitale	272	186	14	86	2	22	6	27
Meru	343	217	13	126	2	23	5	29
NEP	36	23	41	13	27	8	10	17
Nyeri	281	199	14	82	3	22	7	29
Sigalagala	280	186	14	94	1	22	4	25
Total	**2993**	**1908**		**1085**		**214**	**123**	**337**

3. Research instruments

Data was collected using questionnaires which were preferred their flexibility in reaching the respondents. Questionnaires were found efficient in collecting information from a huge sample since respondents answer the same questions [21:76]. The self-completion questionnaires were economical and faster to administer, appropriate to the respondents because they complete the questionnaire at their own convenience provided it is within the time limit agreed with the researcher.

A nominal scale using 5-point Likert scale was used [70]. The questionnaire had semi structured questions. The study employed a drop-and-pick procedure. Anonymity and confidentiality were verbally assured to the respondents to gain their confidence and minimise errors and biasness. A pilot study was used to detect any composition or design fault. Twenty eight questionnaires (8.3% of the sample) were administered to randomly selected employees from Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology (RVIST). For pilot study, 5% to 10% of the target sample is acceptable [3]. Statistical selection is not required in selection of respondents in a pilot test. Inconsistencies established in the questionnaire were amended.

Content validity of the data collection instruments was achieved through evaluating the content intended to be measured and subjection of the tool to experts for rational analysis. SPSS version 20 was used to compute Cronbach's alpha scores in order to check the questionnaire's reliability. Data was analysing using inferential and descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics involved use of regression analysis.

The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 significance level. To test normality and establish whether there was normal distribution of the data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were carried out.

A regression model of the nature $P = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$ was used to model the relationship between structural empowerment and job performance, where, P = Employee Performance, β_0 = Y intercept term, β_1 = Beta coefficients, X_1 = Structural Empowerment, e = constant term (disturbance term) [13]. The study hypothesis was analysed and interpreted as indicated in table 2.

Table 2: Study Hypothesis.

	Objective	Hypothesis	Type of Analysis	Interpretation
i.	To determine the influence of structural employee empowerment on job performance in National Polytechnics in Kenya.	H_{01}: Structural empowerment has no significant influence on job performance in the National Polytechnics in Kenya.	Linear Regression analysis. F-test, t-test.	If p-value < 0.05, Reject the null hypothesis.

4. Results

Data was collected from the National Polytechnics in Kenya. A response rate of 89.6% was realised as 302 were correctly filled and returned out of 337 issued questionnaires. A response rate of more than 70% is suitable for investigation. Based on this affirmation, the 89.6% response rate was satisfactory. Validity refers to the degree to which a data collecting instrument measures what it is supposed to measure [3]. This was attained by issuing the questionnaire to experts who were required to check for legibility, clarity, comprehensiveness and whether the items would attain the objectives of the study. Reliability was addressed by conducted a pilot study. The questionnaires were then adjusted according to the findings of the pilot. Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used to test internal consistency reliability for variables' constructs with the aid of SPSS software. A Cronbach Alpha value equal to or greater than 0.70 is considered sufficient. The Cronbach's alpha obtained in this study was 0.722, which was considered to be within the acceptable levels of internal consistency, indicating that the instrument was reliable. An aggregation of thirteen (13) items gave a structural empowerment composite variable which had a mean of 3.2500 and standard deviation of 1.2946. The researcher wished to establish the respondents' demographic characteristics. The respondents were fairly distributed in terms of gender in the study, as 51.03% were male while 49.04% the study participants were female. This portrayed a fair balance of gender thus considered as a good distribution Figure 2 indicates the employees' distribution by gender.
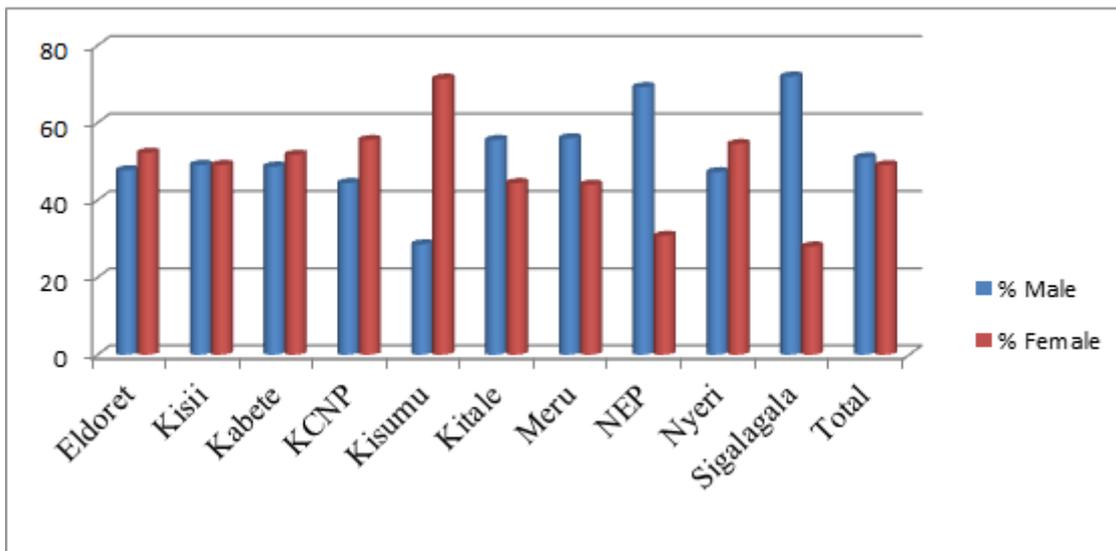

Figure 2: Distribution of the respondents by Gender.

Majority of the employees, 66.93% were below 50 years old as 41.75% were between 31 and 40, 25.18% below 30, and 25.18% were between 40 and 50 years old. Only 7.62 % aged between 51 and 60 years and 0.33% were above 60 years old. The national polytechnics therefore can be concluded to have a youthful staff. Only one employee was above sixty (60) years of age, an indication that the national polytechnics do not retain their staff after retirement. This enables the national polytechnics to employ new and younger employees.

The level of education for the respondents indicated majority, 35.1% of the respondents indicated that they had at least a diploma while 44.74% held degrees, 14.2% possessed masters' degree. Only 0.33% held Ph.Ds. Other qualifications, which mainly consisted of middle level college certificates and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) certificates were held by 5.63%. Kabete National Polytechnic had the highest number of Masters' holders as well as the only PhD respondent captured in this study. The researcher was interested in establishing whether there was any link between employees' level of education and performance in the National Polytechnics. This was done by comparing educational levels of employees with their performance.

Considering the period the respondents had been in their institutions, the researcher observed that majority (43.74%) of the respondents had worked for less than five years in their institutions. 34.46% had worked in their institutions between 5-10 years. Only 21.87% had an experience of above 10 years. The Eldoret and Kisumu National polytechnics had the highest number of staff (32.95% and 35.71%) who had worked in the institutions for over 10 years. This fact can be explained by the fact that the two are the oldest National Polytechnics. This distribution is as indicated in figure 3.
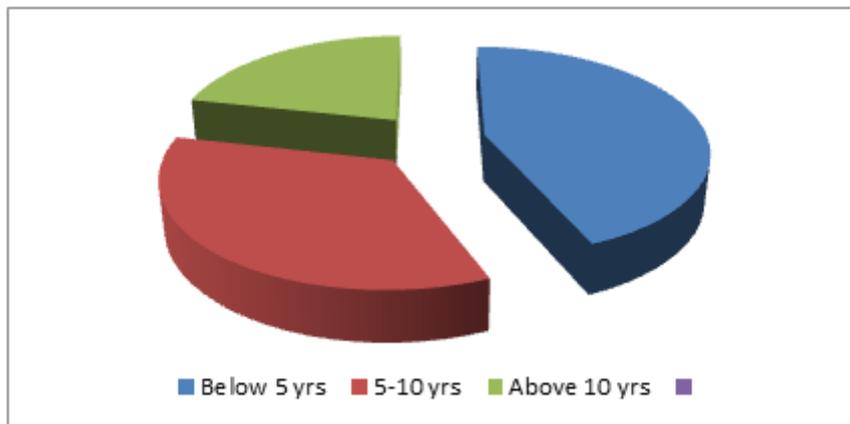

Figure 3: Respondents' years of service.

Descriptive statistics allow the research to describe a distribution of the scores of measurements using indices or statistics. The study findings were presented using percentages. The study sought to obtain responses regarding structural empowerment and job performance using a five point likert scale. Respondent were required to state if they strongly agreed, agreed, were not sure, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the provided statements. The responses were as follows:

On whether the respondents had access to opportunities for advancement of their job, 20.86% strongly agreed and 34.77% agreed. Majority of the respondents, 41.39% and 24.5% strongly agreed and agreed respectively

that their jobs offer them opportunity to participate in interesting, challenging tasks with more responsibilities. While 32.79% agreed, 47.02% did not agree with the statement that the employees were not provided with vital information to enable them make decisions and 20.2% were not sure. On whether the communication channels in institution were open, 36.42% agreed 23.51% disagreed and 27.81% strongly disagreed. On the statement information available to employees was relevant and crucial for attaining the institutional goals and objectives, 40.07% and 25.5% respectively agreed. On whether the rewards offered by their institutions increase their work effort and output, 46.69% agreed 36.42% disagreed and 16.89% were not sure. The means of the items ranged between 2.64 and 3.87 while the standard deviations were between 1.2 and 1.38. Table 4.5 shows a detailed distribution of the responses on influence of structural empowerment on job performance.

The study sought to establish the relationship between structural empowerment, and job performance after the descriptive statistical analysis. Determination of the bivariate nature of the independent and dependent variables was found to be necessary. Inferential statistics were applied to test the hypothesis and determine whether to reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_o) at 5% level of significance, if p-value was < 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

5. Normality test

Parametric tests which include correlation, t-tests, regression and analysis of variance were founded on the assumption that the data is normally distributed [6]. For the tests to be reliable, the data does not have to be perfectly normally distributed. Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests are used for testing the normality assumption. Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test is the most popular test for normality [6]. He also recommends that normality be assessed both visually and through normality testing. The test is non-significance if ($p> 0.05$). It means that the distribution of the sample has no significant difference with a normal distribution implying that it could be compared to a normal distribution. However, if, the test is significant, ($p<0.05$) the distribution is significantly different from a normal distribution thus it is non-normal (Field, 2009). The results are as indicated in table 3.

Table 3: Normality Tests.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Job performance	.091	294	.000	.979	294	.000
Structural Empowerment	.068	294	.002	.987	294	.008

Normal Q-Q Plot of Structural Empowerment

The Q-Q plot on figure 4 indicates that the structural empowerment departure from normality was spread closely to the normal line implying that the data was appropriate for conducting regression analysis.
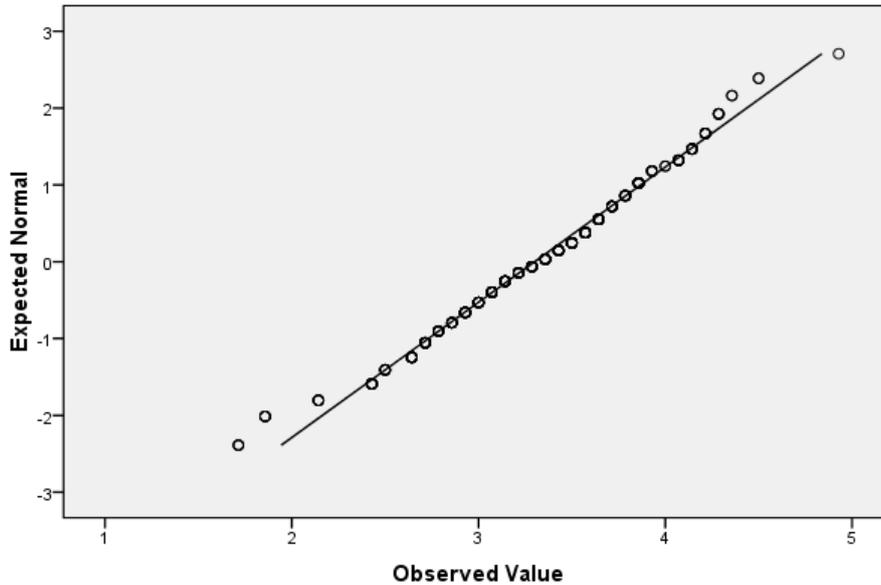
Figure 4: Normal Q-Q plot of structural empowerment.

Regression Results for the Relationship between Structural Empowerment and Job Performance

Regression analysis was employed in determining the linear statistical relation between the independent and dependent variables of the study. It was also used to determine the moderating effect of the moderator. Validity of the model was tested using F- test, while R^2 measured the model's goodness of fit. The regression co-efficient described and outlined the nature and magnitude of the relationship between the variables under study. The results revealed a relationship between structural empowerment and job performance in the national polytechnics in Kenya.

The regression model of X_1 and P was significant ($F(1,294) = 51.353$, P-value <0.001), structural empowerment is a valid predictor in the model. The coefficient of determination R^2 of 0.149 indicated that 14.9% of job performance can be described by structural empowerment. The standard error of 0.480 showed deviation from the line of best fit. The Regression Model fitted to test the relationship was

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

The null hypothesis (H_{o1}) was structural empowerment has no significant influence on job performance in National Polytechnics in Kenya. The beta coefficient for structural empowerment was significant. The null hypothesis ($H_{01}: \beta_2 = 0$) was therefore rejected ($\beta_1 = -0.351$, $t = 7.166$, p-value < 0.001) concluding therefore that structural empowerment (X_1) significantly influences job performance (P).

The Model equation is $P = 4.012 - 0.351X_1$. Where, P is Job Performance, X_1 is structural empowerment. It implies that an increase in the structural empowerment leads to a decrease of -0.351 in job performance index. This is displayed in table 4.

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Table 4: Relationship between Structural Empowerment and Job Performance.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.386[a]	.149	.146	.48007	.149	51.353	1	294	.000

ANOVA[d]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.835	1	11.835	51.353	.000[a]
	Residual	67.757	294	.230		
	Total	79.592	295			

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	4.012	.028		143.717	.000		
	SE	.351	.049	.386	7.166	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Job performance

The study realised that structural empowerment was very important to employees' performance. This agreed with the assertion that employees job satisfaction when facilitated with support, resources and information [5]. showed that access to opportunities such as promotion, training and development is vital to empowerment among others. [17,4] states that empowered employees are able to deal with workplace exhaustion easily, are highly satisfied, are more efficient and are less susceptible to negative behaviour at work.

Summary of Hypothesis Tested

Having considered the regression analyses, the decisions in table 5 were made on the null hypothesis.

Table 5: Results of the Hypothesis Tests.

S/No.	Hypothesis	Decision
H_{01}	Structural empowerment has no significant influence on job performance in the National Polytechnics in Kenya.	Reject H_{01}

6. Discussions

The study sought to establish the influence of structural employee empowerment on job performance in National Polytechnics in Kenya. Descriptive survey design research design used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The population of the study included 2993 employees in the 10 national polytechnics. Disproportionate stratified sampling technique was adopted where 337 employees were sampled. On the demographic profile of the respondents, the study found that gender distribution in the national polytechnics was even. On the education level, majority of employees had diplomas and above. Majority of the employees had worked in their institutions for less than five years. Only a few had worked in their organizations for over ten

years. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used in analysing the data obtained. Regression analysis indicated that structural empowerment influences job performance significantly. Employees indicated that they had access to opportunities for advancement of their job. Majority of the employees indicated that their jobs offer them opportunity to participate in interesting, challenging tasks with more responsibilities. Most of the respondents felt that they were not provided with vital information to enable them to make decisions and that communication channels in their institution were open. The information available to employees was relevant and crucial for attaining the institutional goals and objectives according to the study.

7. Conclusion

From the findings, it was established that if structural empowerment is provided to the employees, job performance is improved. The regression results of the study revealed that there was a relationship between structural empowerment and job performance in the national polytechnics in Kenya. The null hypothesis (H_{01}: $\beta_1 = 0$) was therefore rejected.

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