

Managerial Socio-Interpersonal Conflict's Impact on Organisational Performance in Licensed Restaurants in Mombasa, Kenya

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Abstract

Interpersonal conflict is a widespread phenomenon associated with adverse consequences for employees and hospitality organisations. It is not clear whether these conflicts emanate from socio-interpersonal associations between managers and their staff. It is also unclear whether these interactions influence the performance of licensed restaurants. Since restaurants experience higher staff turnover than other service providers, this study sought to investigate the effect of managerial socio-interpersonal conflict on organisational performance in licensed restaurants in Mombasa County. Based on behavioural management theory, the study concentrated on Mombasa County, an important tourism hub of Kenya. While using a descriptive research design, the study targeted all waiting staff working in licensed restaurants in Mombasa County. Of the 96 questionnaires issued, 89 were duly filled and returned (a response rate of 92.7%). The findings from the linear regression analysis ($F(1, 48) = 109.936, P < 0.0005$) statistically predicted the outcome variable significantly, organisational performance. The adjusted R^2 of 0.696 implies that managerial socio-interpersonal factors accounted for 69.6% of organisational performance. As such, managerial socio-interpersonal conflicts affect organisational performance in licensed restaurants in Mombasa County. Restaurants and other hospitality and tourism-related bodies should consider formulating policies to address managerial socio-interpersonal conflict. This will enable restaurant managers to cope with work-related socio-interpersonal conflicts and improve performance.

Keywords: Managerial socio-interpersonal conflicts, organisational performance, licensed restaurants, behavioural theory

Introduction

Background Information

Hospitality organisations are no longer viewed as a collection of functional areas, but as a combination of highly integrated processes (Vugec, Ivančić & Glavan, 2019), whose

success depends on their performance. An organization's performance is its ability to achieve its set goals. It involves comparing actual achievements against planned targets and evaluating the organization's overall effectiveness. Its effectiveness can either be measured based on its financial results, operational efficiency, or customer satisfaction. All these processes are run by an organisation's staff. Measuring organizational performance helps an organization assess its progress, justify resource allocation, and identify areas for improvement.

To this end, employee performance is therefore central. Employee performance is influenced by their cognitive, emotional and social competence coupled with leadership competencies (Bashaer et al., 2016). According to Aboaoga, Mohamed & Aziz (2018), Organisational performance (OP) has increasingly become important due to its relation to the organisation's strategic goals, customer satisfaction and economic contributions.

Unlike other organisations, the hospitality industry, more so restaurants, face greater challenges while striving to achieve their strategic goals. This is because, by nature, restaurant work is a fertile ground for disagreement emanating from division of labour, inter-dependency, personality type, harassment and leadership style (Jalilvand, Salimpour, Elvasi & Mohammadi, 2017). As such, if employees' behaviour is not properly managed, job stress within the restaurant may soar. This is because, other than the employees, restaurant customers have diverse beliefs, attitudes, personalities and abilities. According to Orłowski et al. (2017), restaurant managers are not only tasked to ensure employees provide consistent service to their customers but also retain high-performing employees in this industry known for above-average turnover rates, partly due to interpersonal conflicts. As such, they need a range of skills to succeed.

It is therefore evident that an organisation cannot carry out its activities effectively without encountering some form of conflict. Conflict is not necessarily good or bad, but an inevitable feature of organisational life and should be judged in terms of its effects on performance (Mullins & Miller, 2008). Interpersonal conflict ranges from minor disagreements between co-workers to physical assaults on others (Abugre, 2017). In most cases, they destroy co-worker relations, since employees involved in interpersonal conflict become cynical towards each other and their work. However, if an interpersonal conflict is properly identified and handled, it can help minimise the destructive influences of the win-lose situation. The severity of interpersonal conflict is also evident. Dana (2001) estimated that 65 per cent of performance problems result from interpersonal conflicts between employees. On their part, Nistorescu and Căprariu (2007) posited that managers and middle-class supervisors use two hours of their daily time solving conflicting situations. Consequently, such conflicts can contribute to high staff turnover (Okoli et al., 2018).

According to Imazai & Ohbuchi (2002), there are two types of organisational conflicts: "namely vertical conflict and horizontal conflict. Vertical conflicts occur in different hierarchical-level groups, such as supervisors and salesmen, whereas horizontal conflicts occur between individuals of the same level, such as managers in the same organisation. In vertical conflicts, individuals at the lower organisational level seek to avoid conflicts with those at higher hierarchy levels. Conversely, top management colleagues face more interpersonal challenges, partly due to their non-routine activities and their inflexibility in resolving conflicts (Weihrich, 1992; Ulutas et al., 2011; Ul-Haq, 2011).

Unlike other organisations, hospitality outlets record a higher employee turnover (Cicerale, 2020). While other industries recorded an average of 25%, the leisure and

hospitality industry recorded a rate of 51.2% in 2015 (Malek et al., 2018). Since 30 per cent to 70 per cent of a manager's time is spent dealing with employees' interpersonal conflict (Saiti, 2015; Taylor, 2008; Watson & Hoffman, 1996) it is not clear whether time available for constructive planning and the promotion of creative initiatives and solutions is enough to enhance organisations' performance. Worse still, restaurants experience a higher turnover and direct interaction with customers than hotels, creating greater interpersonal conflict challenges.

So far, studies on interpersonal conflicts have concentrated on workplace interpersonal conflict among health workers (Jereng et al., 2017) and civil servants in the public sector. Those in the hospitality industry and tourism sought to establish causes of interpersonal conflict (Sundharma & Haes, 2020; Hight et al., 2019; Jimmieson, Tucker & Campbell, 2017; Mucolwe & Ogucha, 2016; Lolli, 2013). Empirical studies on managers' socio-interpersonal conflict have yet to be conceptualised. For this reason, the current study sought to fill the gap by establishing whether MSIC affects organisational performance in licensed restaurants in Mombasa County.

Literature Review

According to Percy's (2016) behavioural theory, '...a greater concern for employees' needs leads to higher satisfaction levels and better overall performance, which leads to behavioural changes in their response to work.' This finding picks up from Elton Mayo "Hawthorne Effect" (1924) theory which posited that employees' performance is not only influenced by their innate ability, but also the work environment and their co-workers. In his study, he found that management attention and engagement with workers and the group dynamics had a greater impact on productivity than other factors such as company culture and benefits.

It is therefore evident that the potential success of any business depends on its performance, which is tied to how well this organisation is run daily to achieve its objectives. From a content perspective, organisations must be prepared to react to the challenges that may threaten their survival. Thus, they must formulate strategies and behaviours that benefit and revitalise their performance (Canova & Hickey, 2012; Zaidi et al., 2014). Given that there are always hurdles to achieving organisational goals, the techniques chosen by leaders must be flexible enough and offer a conducive environment that influences employees' behaviours, attitudes, and motivations to improve their performance outcomes (Babcock-Roberson and Strickland, 2010). This is because, as posited by Verma (1998), '...employees become more productive and happier when they feel heard, valued, and understood.

According to Harbor (1997), no organisation can achieve its objectives without conflict. Conflicts are inevitable in human relationships. They occur anywhere, and their implications for organisational performance are unavoidable. The potential for conflict is greater when there are differences in goals, an interdependency of individual work, or a high level of misunderstanding (Mullins, 1996, 2007; Tjosvold & Hui, 2001; Tjosvold, 1998; Tjosvold & Su Fang, 2004).

Interpersonal conflict stems from disagreements between two individuals (Firman., Ekawarna., Anra, & Setiawan, 2022). These disagreements often come down to differences in points of view, personality mismatches, cultural differences, diverse upbringings, or conflicting values and beliefs (Risser & Saleh, 2022). These conflicts may arise in any setting

where people are frustrated, stressed, have pent-up anger, or lack communication about lingering issues (Risser et al., 2022). Though people have different personalities and needs, disagreements may not necessarily be bad. Sometimes, a conflict can lead to a deeper connection and understanding. However, Kim-Jo, Benet-Martínez, and Ozer, (2010) posit that when egos get involved, people feel their status is threatened, or they get into a pattern of attack. It is only then that conflict may become unhealthy.

Apart from decisional roles, managers assume interpersonal roles to provide direction and supervision for employees and the organisation (Kumar, 2015). At the organisational level, they influence the behaviour of individuals and groups (other managers and employees). Outside of the organisation, they may impact shareholders, customers, suppliers, and the local community. To achieve this, they may apply a singular or several approaches. Whichever set of approaches is considered to manage interpersonal conflict will result in either a decrease or an increase in organisational performance. To improve the overall organisational performance, a manager may need to carefully choose the best approaches that fit the situation to ensure the effective management of conflicts. However, the power of socio-interpersonal conflict resolution approaches is yet to be tested. A study by Firman et al. (2022) delved into personality. It was observed that a manager with a fair and thoughtful personality will certainly be objective in determining the role of the staff and will adjust their ability. However, if based on subjectivism, like and dislike, it will foster a conflict between the leadership and staff. This, in turn, will sustain a conflict. On their part, Imazai & Ohbuchi (2002) examined the short and long-term effects of perceived fairness in organisational conflicts between employees and supervisors. They concluded that "employee justice is essential in resolving organisational conflict. When employees realise there is justice in conflict resolution, their bond strengthens. This, in turn, increases job satisfaction, positive organisational commitment, and satisfaction with conflict outcomes.

Sheehan et al. (2016) sought to test the effect of Human Resource (HR) political skill on the relationship between high-involvement work practices and organisational performance. The results confirmed that the political skill of HR executives strengthened the positive relationship between high-involvement work practice and perceived organisational performance. It also strengthened the positive effect of HR involvement in strategic decision-making on organisational performance. In a bid to investigate the influence of restaurant managers' emotional intelligence and manager support on service employees' attitudes and performance, Han et al. (2017) carried out a study applying affective event theory. They observed that a manager's emotional intelligence and support significantly impact employee job satisfaction, which, in turn, increases service performance.

Research Methodology

The current study targeted waiting staff in licensed restaurants in Mombasa County, an important regional tourism, cultural and economic hub in Kenya. While adopting a descriptive research design, a sample size of 96 respondents was settled on using Cochran's (1977) formula for calculating sample size.

A stratified sampling technique was used to decide on the licensed restaurants to be included in the sample frame. Three strata were set according to the type of restaurant: those located within rated hotels, speciality restaurants and general restaurants. Simple

random sampling was used to select the waiting staff. Content validity was determined by administering the questionnaire to six waiting staff, two picked from each stratum. Care was taken to ensure the six were not included in the final sample frame. The reliability of the research instrument was measured using the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha), which returned a coefficient of 0.909. According to Madan and Kensinger (2017), this coefficient was satisfactory as it lay between 0.7 and 0.8. Of the 96 questionnaires issued to survey respondents, 89 were duly filled and returned, giving a response rate of 92.7%, which was considered very good as it lay between 80-85% (Fowler, 2018).

Findings

The respondents in the study were requested to indicate their gender, age, marital status, level of education and the duration they had been employed. Their responses are captured in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents

		Frequency (n)	%
1 Gender	Male	51	57
	Female	38	43
		89	100
2 Age	20-30	8	9
	31-40	28	31.5
	41 and above	53	59.5
		89	100
3 Marital status	Single	18	20
	Married	71	80
		89	100
4 Highest level of education	Primary	7	7.9
	Secondary	4	4.2
	Certificate	58	65.2
	University	14	15.7
		89	100
5 Duration of employment	Bellow 5 years	8	9
	6-10 years	31	34.8
	11 – 15 years	24	27
	Above 15 years	26	29.2
		89	100

Source: Research Findings

Of the 89 respondents, 57% were males while the rest were female (43%). The greatest age range of these respondents was above 40 years (59.50%). Those aged between 31 and 40 years were (31.50%), while the least represented cohort (9%) ranged between 20 and 30 years. The majority of respondents (80%) were married, while the rest (20%) were single. Respondents with a college level of education had the highest representation at 65.20%, followed by those with a University level of education (15.70%) then those with secondary level (11.20%), while those with primary level of education had the least representation at 7.90% of total respondents surveyed during the study. The highest

representation of staff (34.80%) had worked between 6 – 10 years. This was followed by those who had worked above 15 years (29.20%), then 11 -15 years at 27%, while the least representation was for those who had worked below 5 years at 9%.

The study sought to find out whether managerial factors of social interpersonal conflict affected organisational performance. The research instrument that addressed this objective had statements on a Likert scale of scores 1 – 5, with 1 showing that the respondent strongly disagreed with the statement, while 5 being that they strongly agreed with it (Table 2).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on managerial socio-interpersonal conflict and organisational performance

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Don't understand the challenges faced by staff	89	4.52	.075	.709
Don't review staff performances	89	4.90	.032	.303
Have no avenue for conveying challenges faced by staff	89	4.29	.136	1.281
Don't give feedback on staff performance	89	4.89	.034	.318
Give no directives to staff	89	4.58	.071	.671
Don't define staff roles clearly	89	4.55	.101	.954
Valid N (listwise)	89			

Source: Research Findings

All variables produced high mean scores and low standard deviations. Two variables “Don’t review staff performance” (M=4.90, SD=0.303; 89.9%) and “Don’t give feedback on staff performance” (M=4.89, SD=0.318; 88.8%) had the highest mean scores and the highest number of respondents strongly agreeing. It was also reported that managers never gave directives to the staff while on duty (68.5%, M= 4.58, SD= 0.671); they never defined staff roles clearly (77.5%, M= 4.55, SD= 0.954); had no avenue for conveying challenges faced by staff (69.7%, M= 4.29, SD= 1.281; don’t understand challenges faced by staff (64%, M= 4.52, SD= 0.709). These findings show that most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that managerial factors of social-interpersonal conflict affected organisational performance.

To establish whether a relationship exists between the dependent and independent variables, the null hypothesis, H_{01} , was tested.

H_{01} : MSIC does not significantly affect organisational performance in licensed restaurants.

A Linear regression analysis was used to establish whether managerial socio-interpersonal conflicts predict an organisation's performance. This was used to examine whether the predictor variable (MSIC) was a significant predictor of the outcome variable (Organisational performance), and what magnitude and significance MSIC had on the Organisational performance.

Table 3: Model Summary^b for the relationship between MSIC and Organizational performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
1	.834 ^a	.696	.690	3.38531	.696	109.936	1	48	.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), MSIC

b. Dependent Variable: Organisational performance

The model summary (Table 3) above provided a simple correlation of 0.834, indicating a high degree of correlation between MSIC and organisational performance. The total variation ($R^2=0.696$) of organisational performance could be explained by MSIC. This implies that 69.6% of organisational performance could be explained by MSIC.

To explain how well the regression equation fit the data, an ANOVA analysis was run (Table 4), which showed “sig” =0.000, which is less than 0.005.

Table 4: ANOVA^a for the relationship between MSIC and Organisational performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	1259.903	1	1259.903	109.936	.000 ^b
Residual	550.097	48	11.460		
Total	1810.000	49			

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), MSIC

This implied that the regression model ($F(1, 48) = 109.936$, $P < 0.0005$) statistically predicted the outcome variable significantly, organisational performance. Therefore, the data had a good fit.

Table 5: Coefficients for the Relationship between MSIC and Organizational Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	21.051	4.408		4.775	.000	12.187	29.914
	MSIC	1.647	.157	.834	10.485	.000	1.331	1.963

a. Dependent Variable: organisational performance

The coefficients table (Table 5) sought to predict whether managerial factors statistically contribute to the model. It provided the regression equation presented below:

$$\text{Organizational performance} = 21.051 + 0.834(\text{MSIC})$$

This regression equation shows that for every additional element of MSIC, organisational performance increased by 1.647. Further, the results yielded a low P value ($P=0.000$), implying that this finding can be generalised to the population from which the sample was drawn since it is below the alpha of 0.05. The findings from the regression

analysis imply that MSIC have a statistically significant influence on organisational performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis, that there is a significant relationship between managerial factors and organisational performance in licensed restaurants in Mombasa, Kenya accepted.

The findings underscore the importance of restaurant managers controlling social interpersonal conflict, to enable the restaurants to perform effectively. A response by managers or supervisors to conflict is important, as it implies that the restaurant management is taking the issue seriously. From the findings, it is evident that when managers' socio-interpersonal conflicts are managed effectively, they are likely to impact the image and profitability of the organisation. Consequently, their performance may increase sales due to their understanding of the set goals and challenges faced by each of them, plus their staff, and offering appropriate direction. Further, if occasional meetings are held to boost synergy and review performance, this may enhance their productivity. This may eventually result in improved organisational performance.

Discussions

The results posit that management socio-interpersonal conflicts affect organisational performance in licensed restaurants in Mombasa. Considering that the majority of these managers are married, there is a likelihood that this may influence their socio-interpersonal interaction. More specifically, if their performance is not reviewed and they don't get feedback on their performance. Several other studies support these findings (Firman et al., 2022; Han et al., 2017; Imazai et al., 2002; Sheehan et al., 2016; and Zaidi et al., 2014). Firman et al. (2022) observed that while objective managers can adjust to fit in an organisational environment, subjective ones are likely to create conflict between the leadership, which may compromise performance. Equally, Sheehan et al. (2016) confirmed that the political skill of HR executives strengthened the positive relationship between high involvement work practice and perceived organisational performance. The same applied to Han et al. (2017) and Zaidi et al. (2014).

Further, this finding conforms to Percy's (2016) behavioural theory, which posits that if an organisation addresses the employee behaviour at work, they may have a higher satisfaction level. This may then increase the chances of optimising performance. This may further lead to behavioural changes in their response to work.

However, it is interesting to note that none of the above-mentioned studies concentrated on the hospitality industry. Specifically, none of them centred on the Manager's socio-interpersonal conflicts. While Firman delved into Personality traits, Sheehan looked at HR executives, Imazai on organisational conflict in general, Hans on emotional intelligence, and Zaidi centred on leadership style.

Conclusion

Given that restaurants are highly susceptible to interpersonal conflict more than any other service provider, thanks to a myriad of interactions that managers are involved in, not only at personal level, but also with their peers, subordinates and customers, organisations must formulate working techniques that will mitigate this challenges, more so, those minimising managers socio-interpersonal conflicts. Managers must acquire and use techniques that are flexible to accommodate change and foster teamwork to enhance organisational performance.

Recommendations

Considering that the majority of restaurant managers have attained tertiary education and have worked at the managerial level for a duration exceeding five years, they are vulnerable to socio-interpersonal conflicts. It is therefore imperative that measures are considered to help mitigate these conflicts. Each hospitality enterprise should ensure that its management staff undergo refresher courses on socio-interpersonal conflict management to help them handle conflicts among their staff and themselves. In addition, these enterprises should develop short-term curricula that cover these aspects and train their staff on a refresher basis. They should further review their staff performance based on competencies gained during the refresher courses and share feedback. This will create a positive relationship between interested parties and the restaurants, resulting in better organisational performance.

The current study focused on restaurant managers. Future studies may analyse the situations in other service industries to give a more elaborate view of activities in the service industry. The effect of managers' marital status and the duration of service on an organisation's productivity should also be factored in future studies.

The findings will not only benefit the restaurant managers but also all hotel entrepreneurs. While the restaurant managers will improve on their interpersonal conflict resolution skills hence use them to increase productivity, the entrepreneurs will benefit from the resultant productivity, which will assure them of greater returns to their investments.

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