

Rational Goals and Employee Engagement in Manufacturing Firms in Kenya.

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 Crossref DOI: [10.61108/ijsshr.v2i2.108](https://doi.org/10.61108/ijsshr.v2i2.108)

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is indispensable for any organization that seeks sustainable success. How employees perceive the organizational climate has significant and far-reaching consequences for the organization. The manufacturing sector remains a cornerstone of the Kenyan economy. However, it has been noted that the sector is experiencing decline amidst a myriad of challenges that include high handedness, failure to adopt global management practices and a generally negative perception by employees. Yet, it is of utmost importance that organizations create a conducive environment for employees to thrive and remain engaged. This study sought to evaluate the relationship between rational goals and employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya. Specifically, this study sought to determine the relationship between clarity of goals, effort, efficiency, quality and feedback as the sub-constructs of the independent variable and employee engagement as the dependent variable. A cross-sectional survey research design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches was adopted. The target population for this study was all the 578 manufacturing firms located in Nairobi and its surroundings and which are members of the Kenya Association of Manufacturers. Stratified and simple random sampling was used to arrive at a sample of 236 manufacturing firms. Primary data was collected by the use of a structured questionnaire and subsequently analyzed using a mix of descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS version 25.0. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to establish the direction and extent of the relationship between the variables. Univariate regression was used to explain the relationship between these variables while ANOVA was used to determine whether the regression model was reliable or not. Standard f and t tests were used to determine the significance of the coefficient. The hypotheses were also tested. Data was presented using tables. The study established that there was a positive and significant relationship between rational goals on one hand and employee engagement on the other. The conclusion deduced from this study was that engaged employees are the catalyst for organizations seeking success. Additionally, human relations, is a key element affecting employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya. In view of this, it is recommended that manufacturing firms be obligated to create an organizational climate that is contrived to and aimed at enhancing employee engagement.

Keywords: *Employee Engagement, Rational Goals, Manufacturing Sector*

Apa Citation

Wagacha, K. N. ., Were, S. ., & Waiganjo, E. . (2024). Rational Goals and Employee Engagement in Manufacturing Firms in Kenya. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research (IJSSHR)* ISSN 2959-7056 (o); 2959-7048 (p), 2(2), 218-232. <https://doi.org/10.61108/ijsshr.v2i2.108>

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In academia as well as the business world, there has been a keen and rising interest regarding the consanguinity that exists between employees and management. There exists an overall concurrence that the manner in which employees behave does not only emanate from their individual traits but also from their work environment (Berberoglu, 2018). Moreover, the shared perceptions of processes and behavioral expectations in organizations affect how employees behave (Brock-Baskin & McKee, 2019). Importantly, it is these employees who are the key resource for organizations in their attempts to attain sustainable competitive advantage in today's dynamic business world. Hence, creating a healthy and positive organizational climate that values the welfare of the employees is indispensable if organizations are to achieve their objectives (Arya & Sainy, 2017). Patterson, West, Shackleton, Dawson, Lawthom, Maitlis, Robinson and Wallace (2005) delineate human relations as one of the variables underpinning organizational climate as conceptualized by the competing values framework by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983).

This model has been adopted in a number of countries as a measure of rational goals as part of organizational climate: Italy (Ancarani, Di Mauro & Giammaco, 2018); United States of America (Lee, 2016; Floyd, 2016); Norway (Nilsen, 2018); Australia (Adams, Dawson & Foureur, 2016) and Kenya (Rintari, Gachunga & Senaji, 2019). In the recent past, researchers in the organizational domain have devoted a tremendous amount of effort to understand the construct of organizational climate in relation to employee outcomes (Willis, Reynolds & Lee, 2019). Organizational climate, of which rational goals is a key variable, has been found to be an important predictor of a variety of key employee outcomes which include: academic achievement (Adu, 2015); innovation (Karanja & Ndurumo, 2016); job performance (Githinji & Gachunga, 2017); psychological empowerment (Wang'ombe, 2017); emotional intelligence (Al Ghazo, Suifan & Alnuami, 2019) and time banditry (Brock-Baskin & McKee, 2019).

However, there has been mixed results with regard to the influence that rational goals, as an element of organizational climate, has on employee outcomes. Case in point, while Karanja (2016) found that there did not exist a statistically significant relationship between organizational climate and job satisfaction, Moslehpour, Atlantsetseg, Mou and Wong (2019) were of the considered view that an agreeable organizational climate will culminate in increased levels of job satisfaction. Consistent with this, Lee (2017) opines that employees who possess varied individual-level characteristics have varied cognizance of organizational climate. To add to this, age, education, work experience at the current work place, work position and employee status has a direct impact on the perceived organizational climate.

Employee engagement, which is considered an important concept in management theory and practice has also generated broad interest in recent years. Armstrong and Taylor (2014, page 167) defines employee engagement as a condition that is characterized by commitment by employees to their working addition to the general organization and this manifests itself through an impetus to achieve high levels of performance. Nimon, Schuck & Zigarmi (2016) define employee engagement as an active, work-related positive psychological state. According to Bakker and Schaufeli (2015) employee engagement is usually linked with feelings of significance, keenness, gratification, motivation and is indicative of a durable emotional/inspiration state.

Importantly, Bakar (2014) proffers that it is essential to obtain a validated and accurate definition of employee engagement since, as a concept, it has various definitions conceptualized in various ways by different schools of thought with some defining it as being present at work while others have viewed it as being a concept that is opposite to burnout. This makes it important for each

researcher to spell out the uniqueness of its definition, which is especially crucial, in order to avoid overlaps with other concepts that include organizational commitment, job involvement and job satisfaction. This is consistent with Shekari (2015) who notes that employee engagement in itself is not a single unitary construct rather it has many facets which means that the outcomes may vary depending on the choice of employee engagement aspects involved.

Notably, academic conceptualizations that define employee engagement in its own right have a consensus that it entails behavioral energy (vigour), an emotional component (dedication) and a cognitive component (absorption) (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2014). Consequently, this study conceptualizes employee engagement based on the definition by Schaufeli *et al* (2001) who posit that it is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption. Furthermore, vigour is explained as a condition characterized by high energy levels while dedication is described as being strongly involved in one's work. Absorption is explained a condition where one is fully concentrated and happily engrossed in work.

The most important measurement instrument for employee engagement is the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli *et al*, 2001) which is reflective of all the components of engagement (Rich *et al*, 2010). Confirmatory factor analyses convincingly show that the hypothesized three-factor structure of the UWES is superior to other models (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). According to Vallieres, McAuliffe, Hyland, Galligan and Ghee (2017) the UWES is commonly used to study engagement in employees and has been translated into 23 different languages in addition to being applied in a variety of cultural contexts that include: China (Fong, 2012); the United States of America (Mills, Culbertson & Fullagar, 2012); Finland (Hakanen, 2002) among a number of other European countries. This is consistent with Carmona-Halty, Schufeli and Salanova (2019) who propound that the UWES-9, which is an improvement of the original UWES, has been validated in industrial-organizational settings in various countries across the world: Brazil (Sinval, Marques-Pinto, Queiros & Maroco, 2018); Russia (Lovakov, Agadullina & Schaufeli, 2017); Italy (Balducci *et al.*, 2010); Serbia (Petrovic, Vukelic & Cizmic, 2017); Portugal (Cadime, Lima, Marques-Pinto & Ribeiro, 2016); South Korea (Song, Hong & Jo, 2020) and Poland (Kulikowski, 2017).

The original UWES had 17 items in addition to the three dimensions of vigour, dedication and absorption. Subsequently, due to pragmatic reasons, the UWES was lessened and this resulted in a 9-item version (UWES-9) which also showed adequate psychometric properties according to Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova (2006). This is consonant with Garbero, Labarthe, Ferreira-Umpierrez & Chiminelli-Tomas (2019) who submit that UWES-9 has been validated in 10 countries with a sample of almost 15000 people demonstrating satisfactory psychometric properties. Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) postulates that employee engagement has been found to have a positive relationship with both individual and organizational performance. In this case, individual performance is characterized by commitment and positive behaviour while organizational performance is marked by customer satisfaction and financial returns. Echoing this assertion, Chelang'at, Were and Odhiambo (2019) propound that having engaged employees is highly beneficial to the organization since it leads to numerous positive outcomes that include: high employee retention, fewer complaints of unfairness, quality products and services, higher productivity and increased organizational profitability. Consequently, it behooves organizations to engage their employees in order to attain a competitive advantage.

Several studies have concluded that there exists a high correlation between employee engagement and positive outcomes that include job satisfaction and high levels of employee performance (Nimon, Schuck & Zigarmi, 2016; Koech & Cheboi, 2017). The most widely used operationalization of employee engagement and which has been validated is the 9-item Utrecht

Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker, 2002) which includes several items for the three dimensions of vigour, dedication and absorption. Employees who are engaged give organizations crucial competitive advantages which include lower employee turnover and an inclination to contribute more to organizational productivity (Pratimasarangi & Nayak, 2016). This study conceptualizes employee engagement based on the definition by Schaufeli *et al* (2001) who posit that it is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption.

Manufacturing is widely viewed as a cornerstone of any thriving economy. According to Chege, Nguu and Kimuyu (2014) government policy reforms in the manufacturing sector since the year 2000 have come in the form of 4 blueprints: The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, The Economic Recovery for Wealth Creation, Kenya Vision 2030 and The Big Four Agenda. Currently, manufacturing firms in Kenya engage in production of a variety of products. There are 12 key industrial sub-sectors involved in processing and value-addition according to the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (2018) directory. They include: building, mining and construction; chemical and allied; energy, electrical and electronics; food and beverages; leather and footwear; metal and allied; motor vehicle assemblers and accessories; paper and board; pharmaceuticals and medical equipment; plastics and rubber; textiles and apparel and finally, timber, wood and furniture.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The World Bank (2018) reports that manufacturing in Kenya is one of the sectors that have contributed to weakness in private sector growth since the sector has been marginally deteriorating and that its contribution to Kenya's GDP in the five years preceding 2018 has been on a downward trend. Additionally, according to Kenya Association of Manufacturers (2018) the country has been experiencing premature deindustrialization which is illustrated by the GDP contribution by the manufacturing sector. Consistent with this, KNBS (2020) reports that in 2019 the manufacturing sector in Kenya grew at a paltry 3.2% as compared to a revised growth of 4.3% in 2018 while the sector's volume of output expanded by only 2% in 2019 compared to 5.6% in 2018.

Were (2016) submits that the manufacturing sector in Kenya faces endemic difficulties in attracting and retaining skilled employees. Moreover, Caroline and Kanyanjua (2019) posit that some manufacturing firms like East African Portland Cement Company frequently experience employee unrest due to a harsh working environment. Importantly, according to Gallup (2018) only 15% of employees globally are engaged at work. The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the problem with manufacturing firms in Kenya rapidly changing focus from retaining jobs and increasing profitability, to improving cash flow at the expense of job security. This shift in strategy has led to uncertainty among employees who now experience low morale and are more disengaged than before (KPMG & KAM, 2020).

Importantly, according to the Big Four Agenda, the manufacturing sector is expected to contribute 15% of GDP by the year 2022 with the sector also being a cornerstone of Vision 2030, Kenya's long term transformational roadmap (G.O.K, 2018). If this situation remains unaddressed, Kenya's goal of becoming the provider of choice for basic manufactured goods in Eastern and Central Africa and the country's desire to become an industrialized country will remain elusive. Moreover, if challenges persist in the manufacturing sector, workers will continue being laid off (Kipkemoi, 2017). This study sought to answer the research question, by addressing the gaps evidenced in the reviewed literature, that is: what is the relationship between rational goals and employee engagement in selected manufacturing firms in Kenya?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to evaluate the relationship between rational goals and employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Rational goals have no significant relationship with employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The proposed study sought to determine the relationship between rational goals and employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya. According to the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (2018), 80% of all manufacturing firms in Kenya are located in Nairobi or its environs. Consequently, this study specifically focused on 578 manufacturing firms whose membership is with the Kenya Association of Manufacturers and which are located in Nairobi. This study targeted all the middle-level managers, lower-level managers and operational employees in these manufacturing firms. A multi-stage sampling technique comprising of two stages- stratified random sampling and simple random sampling- were used to select the sample for this study. A cross-sectional survey using both quantitative and qualitative approaches was used. The dependent variable is employee engagement. The importance of the manufacturing sector cannot be overstated especially since this sector is anticipated to contribute 15% of Kenya's Gross Domestic Product by the year 2022 and remains an anchor for both Vision 2030 and The Big Four Agenda which are the country's key transformational blueprints.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

A theory is a generalization about a phenomenon, an explanation of how or why something occurs (Takač 2008). Theories describe, explain, predict, or control human phenomena in a variety of contexts. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), a theory is an explanation, a systematic account of relationships among phenomena. This study is guided by the goal setting theory. The goal setting theory, first proposed by Edwin Locke (1968), is linked to task performance and emphasizes the importance of the relationship between goals and success. It is considered a theory of motivation which propounds that challenging goals, coupled with appropriate feedback, leads to better performance of tasks. According to Vigota-Gadot & Angert (2007) the basic premise of the theory is that an individual's conscious intentions regulate his/her actions and a goal is simply what the individual is consciously trying to accomplish. The key features of the theory are that clear and specific goals lead to greater output. The goals, however, must be realistic and challenging as this will motivate the individual to attain the next goal. Feedback is important since it serves as a means for making clarifications and regulating goal difficulties. Feedback may also induce a person, who previously did not have a specific goal, to set a goal to improve performance and may also inform the person when his/her current level of effort is insufficient while providing recommendations on how to improve.

Locke (1968) propounds that human being have the power to conceptualize goals and set long-range purposes. Moreover, it is vital that goals be time-constrained. Ultimately, this influences employee choices, effort and endurance in their efforts to finding new ways to achieve the goal. According to the theory, goals can be made specific by quantifying and enumerating them. This implies that by making the goals measurable and by defining the tasks to be carried out in the effort to achieve the goal, employee performance is improved. The theory remains vital in view of the fact that a wide array of research suggests that goal-setting is an effective strategy (Swann, Rosenbaum, Lawrence, Vella, McEwan & Ekkekakis, 2020). In the context of this study, the goal setting theory will be used to underpin the independent variable of rational goals since it links

goals to success and posits that goals, combined with feedback results in motivated employees and increases chances of improving performance. The theory places great importance in clearly defining goals, which is consonant with the rational goals variable whose primary emphasis is the pursuit and attainment of well-defined objectives where the key measures are clarity of goals, the effort that employees put, the efficiency of the employees and the pressure that these employees are under to meet targets (Patterson *et al*, 2005).

2.2 Conceptual framework

Turner et al., (2017) established a conceptual framework as the collection of distinct principles and concepts adapted from interconnected study disciplines and applied to constitute successive presentations

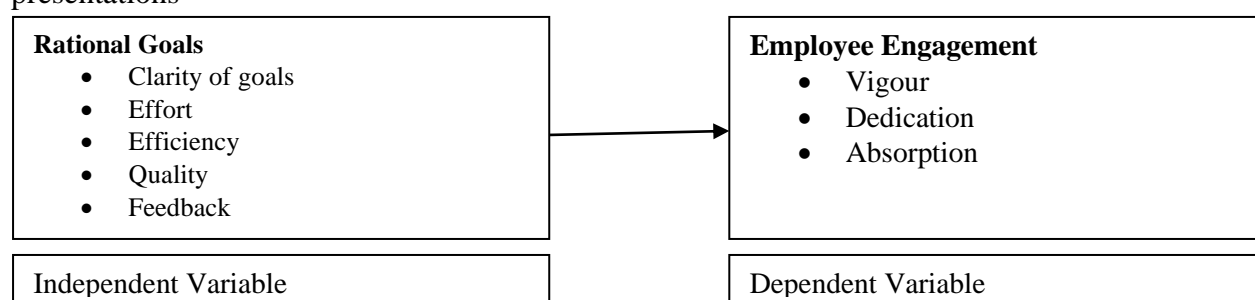


Figure. 1: Conceptual Framework; Source: Researcher (2024)

2.3. Review of Study Variables

The primary emphasis of the rational goals model is the pursuit and attainment of well-defined objectives where the dimensions include: clarity of goals, effort, efficiency, quality and feedback (Patterson *et al*, 2005). The rational goals model aims at productivity and profit with the role of the manager being that of a director and a pragmatic producer (Melo, Silva & Parreira 2014). Therefore managers are expected to give emphasis to planning, establishing goals and defining objectives. Van der Hock, Groeneveld and Kuipers (2018) posit that goals specify the desired outcomes or performance that should be realized.

Goal clarity supports employees in identifying what is expected of them and which behaviour is required for achievement of the goal and also lowers ambiguity (Davis & Stazyk, 2015). Worker effort influences the labour productivity of firms. This is according to Nappo (2016) who further points out that an important measure of worker effort is individual absenteeism and it is surmised that the employee absentee rate may reflect the level of effort put forth. In general, productivity vis-a-vis employees can be defined as the ratio between a measure of output (scales or units produced) and input (number of hours worked or cost of labour) with worker performance being a function of many features that include worker effort (Sauermann, 2016). Employees who are engaged are in most cases assumed to work more efficiently while prioritizing the success of the organization (Hanashya, 2016). Quality assurance and quality improvement can be seen as parts of quality management (Palm, Lilja & Wiklund, 2016). Quality improvement projects have added not only to the financial sustainability but also to the environmental sustainability of an organization (Vandebrande, 2019). Managers are aware that superior quality would lead to better performance in addition to other benefits that include customer loyalty, market share growth and organizational productivity with a dynamic and strategic approach being of utmost importance (Nejadjavad & Gilaninia, 2016).

According to Patterson et al (2005) pressure to produce simply refers to the degree of compulsion that is directed at employees by their employers to meet the pre-established targets. Atherton (2015) remark that targets are intended to be aspirational when they are conceived and the aspiration to achieve the target can lead to positive changes in organizational culture. Constructive

performance feedback has a significant effect in mitigating the negative relationship between role ambiguity and employee job satisfaction according to Jong (2016). In response to feedback, employees can adjust their performance to meet the work goals or even alter the goals themselves which can increase extrinsic motivation (Lee, Idris & Tuckey, 2019).

2.3 Empirical Review

Rintari, Gachunga and Senaji (2019) carried out a study that sought to examine the relationship between organizational climate dimensions that included rational goals as an independent variable and performance as the dependent variable, in National referral hospitals in Kenya. The study used a mixed design of quantitative and qualitative designs to obtain data. Correlation and regression analysis was carried out in an attempt to determine the relationship between the variables. The findings revealed a positive and significant influence between organizational climate and performance. Furthermore, it was revealed that rational goals have a significant relationship with performance in Kenyan referral hospitals.

The study by Datche and Mukulu (2015) aimed at establishing the effect of transformational leadership on employee engagement in the civil service in Kenya. Survey data of 252 civil servants from 18 top performing state corporations was used to investigate the existing relationship. Stratified random sampling was used to select the respondents with data being analyzed with the help of SPSS. The findings of this study revealed that there existed a statistically significant relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement, on one hand, and organizational performance on the other.

Comparatively another study sought to investigate the moderating role of supervisory support on the relationship between human resource management practices and employee and engagement in the garments industry in Bangladesh. This study was carried out by Alam, Ullah, Islam and Chowdhury (2024) and collected data from 280 employees in the garment industry. Data was analysed using SMART-PLS software. Through SEM, data findings revealed that there existed a significant relationship between the predictor and criterion variables. Importantly, the study noted that employee engagement increased simultaneously with supervisory roles that were positive.

Duong and Phan (2024) conducted a study in Vietnam examining how much personal values can be used to explain employee engagement at the place of work. A total of 255 questionnaires were administered to respondents in companies located across the country. Data was analyzed using SMART-PLS the study findings revealed that basic personal values significantly influence employee engagement. In short, engaged employees are conspicuous through their personal values. Song Hung and Jo (2021) carried out a study that sought to develop a tool to comprehensively measure and validate employee engagement. After an initial study on 224 respondents established that 22 items in the data collection tool were significant, a main study was subsequently carried out and involved 1092 respondents. Data was analyzed using confirmatory factor and analysis. Four sub-scales were substantiated: Organizational, cognitive, affective and performance engagement.

Svensson, Jeong, Shuck and Otto (2021) found that there existed a strong and significant relationship between employee engagement, work behavior, turnover intentions, organizational performance and psychological wellbeing. This study was carried out at agencies involved with North America sport for development. From the findings, it was established that there were various prerequisites for employee engagement that included intrinsic motivation and mission attachment. The study recommended that leader behavior that were compassionate in nature become integrated in management. Also, organizations should strive to enhance communication strategies.

The study by Kanake, Kemboi & Tenai (2020) explored the impact of employee engagement and employee empowerment on innovative work behavior. The area of study was manufacturing firms in Kenya. Data was collected from 470 respondents, using a self-administered questionnaire. These

workers were employed by the manufacturing firms in Nairobi. Having subjected data collected to the Hayes Process Macro Model 4, the findings established that employee empowerment had a positive and significant effect on employee engagement and innovative work behavior. Additionally, the study findings surmised that employee engagement had a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior. Moreover, it was also a finding of the study that employee engagement partially moderated the relationship between employee empowerment and innovative work behavior. The influence that flexibility at the workplace has on the engagement of employees was studied by Lee, Chong and Ojo (2024). The study focused on the young generation. 185 respondents got to answer online questionnaires. Subsequently, data was analyzed using structural equation modelling (SEM). The study findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between the variables. The study offered an insightful understanding of flexibility at the workplace in addition to employee engagement.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The choice of research design for this study was informed by the fact that cross-sectional surveys, which are often described as snapshots of the population under study, collect data in order to make inferences about a population at one point in time (Lavrakas, 2008). The target population for this study was all the 578 manufacturing firms in the 12 key industrial sub-sectors obtained from the directory of the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (2018) and which are located in Nairobi. The target population was identified guided by the fact that 80% of all manufacturing firms in Kenya are located in Nairobi and its surroundings (KAM, 2018). This study will target all the middle-level managers, lower-level managers and operational employees of these 578 firms. The sample size for the quantitative data in this study was 236. The Yamane sample size determination formula (Yamane, 1967) was used to arrive at the sample size. Data for this study was collected using a questionnaire which is a research instrument consisting of a set of standard questions, frequently referred to as items, that follow a certain order and whose purpose is to collect individual data on explicit topics (Lavrakas, 2008). The use of questionnaires makes it possible for descriptive, correlation and inferential statistical analysis (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). Data for this study was collected and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS Version 25.0) software. By employing descriptive statistics, data was described in terms of frequencies, percentages and standard deviation. Inferential statistics permitted the researcher to use the sample of 236 firms to make generalizations about the entire population. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to establish the direction and extent of the relationships between the independent variable (Y) and dependent variable (X). Multiple regression analysis was used to explain the relationship between the variables in the study while ANOVA was used to determine whether the regression model was reliable or not. Standard f and t tests were used to determine the significance of the coefficient.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Response Rate

A total of 236 questionnaires were administered to 236 employees of manufacturing firms in Kenya. Out of these, 186 questionnaires were returned. However, 18 of the returned questionnaires were insufficiently filled and were hence rejected. Consequently, 168 questionnaires, which were found to be usable for this study, were analyzed. This represented a response rate of 71.18%. Mugenda and Mugenda (2009) propound that a response rate of 50% is regarded as adequate for analysis and reporting while 60% is graded as good and responses above 70% are considered excellent.

4.2 Descriptive Findings and Analysis

4.2.1 Descriptive Analysis of Rational Goals

The descriptive analysis was done on the items in the questionnaire regarding rational goals on Likert scale to establish the percentages, means, and standard deviations of the respondents. The Likert scale was: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4=agree, and 5= strongly agree. For the purpose of interpretation, 1 and 2 were grouped together as disagreed, 4 and 5 were grouped together as agreed, and 3 was left as neutral. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Rational Goals

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
It is clear what the aims of the company are.	3.89	0.90
Time and money would be saved if work were better organized.	3.65	1.03
Employees are enthusiastic about their work.	3.82	1.28
Employees get by doing as little as possible.	3.35	1.00
Employees have a good idea about how well they are doing their jobs.	3.97	0.84
In general, the work loads of employees are fair.	3.60	1.02
This company is always seeking to achieve the highest standards of quality.	3.73	1.12
This company has a reputation for producing top quality products.	3.97	1.06

The results showed that 80.9% of the respondents agreed with the statement that “it is clear what the aims of the company are, 10.7% disagreed with the statement, while 8.3% were neutral. The mean response rate was 3.89 and with a standard deviation of 0.90. Respondents were asked to give their opinion on whether employees at the company get by with doing as little as possible. 75% of the respondents disagreed which implied that employees’ output is monitored. 14.9 % of the respondents agreed while 10.1% were non-committal. The mean response was 3.35 while the standard deviation was 1.00. As a follow-up, respondents were asked whether “employees have a good idea about how well they are doing their jobs”. From the responses, 9.5% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, 86.3% agreed and 4.2% were neutral. On whether or not the company is always seeking to achieve the highest standards of quality, 69.2% of respondents agreed while 20.3% disagreed. 10.1 % neither agreed nor disagreed. The mean response was 3.73 and the standard deviation was 1.12.

4.2.1 Descriptive Analysis of Employee Engagement

The descriptive analysis was done on the items in the questionnaire regarding employee engagement on Likert scale to establish the percentages, means, and standard deviations of the respondents. The Likert scale was: 0= never, 1= almost never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often and 5= very often and 6= always. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Engagement

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	3.50	1.01
My job inspires me	3.51	1.02
I am immersed in my work	3.62	1.06
I am proud of what I do	3.55	1.03
I get carried away when I am working	3.56	1.04
At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy	3.57	1.20
At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	3.58	1.05
I feel happy when I am working intensely	3.71	1.02
I am enthusiastic about my job	3.80	1.05

Majority of the respondents indicated “sometimes” to the statement “when I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work”. The mean was 3.50 and the standard deviation 1.01. This was interpreted to mean that a majority of employees in manufacturing firms in Kenya lack vigour in relation to their jobs. Among the nine statements, it was this one that had the lowest mean. Two statements which represent the “dedication” construct of employee engagement are “I’m enthusiastic about my job” and “I am proud of the work I do”. They had a mean of 3.80 and 3.55 respectively. This implies that the average response for the two statements was “sometimes”. With regard to the “absorption” construct of employee engagement, the statements “I am immersed in my work” and “I get carried away when I’m working” the means and standard deviations were 3.62, 1.06 and 3.56, 1.04 respectively. In general, majority of the responses gravitated towards “sometimes” and “often”.

4.3 Inferential Statistics

4.3.1 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was carried out to evaluate whether the independent variable (Rational Goals) could be deemed a significant determinant of employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya. The regression results for the relationship between rational goals and employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya were provided in table 4. The value $R = 0.607$ indicated a moderate correlation while $R^2 = 0.368$ implying that 60.7% of the variation in employee engagement can be explained by rational goals. The overall significance of the regression model was shown in Table 4.28 the significance of 0.000 is indicative of the variables being statistically significant. F-test was conducted to test the null hypothesis that rational goals have no significant relationship with employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya.

Table 3: Regression Results for Rational Goals and Employee Engagement

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error Of the Estimate
1	.492 ^a	.465	.460	1.41642

The results of ANOVA test show that the F- value is 14.946 with p-value = 0.000 which is less than 0.05, meaning that the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between rational goals and employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya. The regression results in table 5 show that the effect of rational goals on Employee Engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya was significant ($F(1, 161) = 14.945$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). With $R = 0.492$ and $R^2 = 0.465$, the model implies that about 49.2.7% of employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya changes were accounted for by rational goals, while a variation of 46.5 % in employee engagement was brought about by rational goals. The F test was significant with a p value = 0.000 which was less than the standard p value of 0.05 and this meant that the model was significant. From ANOVA, since p value $p = 0.000$ and was lower than $p = 0.05$ (p value $0.000 < 0.05$), then the contribution of rational goals on Employee engagement was significant, and the conclusion is that rational goals has a positive relationship with employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya.

Table 4: ANOVA for Rational Goals and Employee Engagement

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.089	1	32.089	14.946	0.000 ^a
	Residual	343.552	160	2.147		
	Total	375.641	161			

The coefficients of the rational goals variable constructs were also significant. The coefficients for rational goals ($\beta=1.212$, $t= 3.866$, $p= 0.003<0.05$ indicated significance. This also implied that an increase in a unit of rational goals led to an increase in employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya by 1.212 units. Since the aggregated p -value $=0.003< 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that there was a statistically significant relationship between rational goals and employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya. However, the study findings are inconsistent with the findings of Ancarani *et al.* (2018) who found an insignificant relationship between rational goals and employee engagement, something that they attributed to resource-demand imbalance.

Table 5: Beta Coefficients for Rational Goals

Variable	Coefficients	Std. Error	t-Statistic	P-value
(Constant)	0.611	0.819	0.746	0.457
Rational Goals	1.212	0.314	3.866	0.003

Based on the results from table 5, the regression model became:

$$EE= 0.611 + 1.212RG$$

Where:

EE= Employee Engagement

RG= Rational Goals

H₀₄: *Rational goals have no significant relationship with employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya.*

The null hypothesis that rational goals have no significant relationship with employee engagement was therefore rejected and it was concluded that there was a statistically significant relationship between rational goals and employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The findings of the study established that there was a positive and significant relationship between rational goals and employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya. The competing values framework proffers that the rational goals variable conceptualizes organizations functioning within the framework of productivity and goal achievement. Consistent with this, the evidence shows that the goals set by manufacturing firms in Kenya are clear and are directed towards enhancing organizational performance. However, a section of employees pointed to the fact that employees are not particularly enthusiastic about their work. Moreover, it was established that employees regularly received feedback about how well they were doing their jobs. Well delineated aims

directed at accomplishing efficiency and optimum output coupled with feedback, based on the findings of the study, can increase the levels of employee engagement.

5.2 Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, it is recommended that management should define goals clearly and communicate on the same to employees. The importance of working effectively should also be emphasized to employees and a framework for the same ought to be clearly spelt out. Regular feedback to employees on their performance and likelihood to meet targets should also be outlined both in organizational policy as well as communicated to employees. Furthermore, management ought to be consistent in involving employees in decision-making and providing a measure of freedom with regard to job design. Moreover, management should cultivate an atmosphere of cooperation and trust in addition to continuously developing employee skills through training with a view to enhancing employee engagement. Similarly, in line with the findings of this study, it is recommended that management ought to strive to attain harmony and regulation in the organization by seeking to ensure that rules and procedures are abided by without exception. This will lead to the stability of the organization, which will in turn enhance employee engagement.

5.3 Areas of Further Research

In cognizance of the limitations proffered in this study, it was impossible to exhaust all the antecedents and their outcomes in manufacturing firms in Kenya. It is recommended, therefore, that research be conducted to determine other antecedents that lead to employee engagement. Importantly, the combined influence of the predictor variables of this study accounted for less than 50% of the changes in employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Kenya. This is indicative of the fact that there are other variables that play a vital role in employee engagement. Hence, other studies can include more variables in the model. Moreover, this study conceptualized organizational climate using the competing values framework. There exist other models that can be considered in measuring organizational climate aside from the competing values framework. Similarly, leadership style and employee engagement were conceptualized using the full range leadership model and Utrecht work engagement scale respectively. Future studies can consider other models for the same variables. Further, this study used a descriptive research design that was cross-sectional in nature. Longitudinal studies can be carried out so as to measure the phenomenon under investigation for a longer period of time.

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