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# Employee Engagement in Private Security Firms: A Case Study of G4S Security Services Kenya Limited

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*Abstract:*
*Employee engagement is an important attribute in any organization. Employee ownership increases the employees' level of ownership and improves the relationship between employees and their employers. This study was aimed at finding out the factors that affect employee engagement in G4S Security Services Kenya Limited. The target population comprised 600 employees from the head office. The study adopted descriptive research design. The study established that training and development, recognition by immediate manager, communication, equal opportunity and pay and benefits affect employee engagement in the private security organization.*

*Keywords: Communication, employee engagement, equal opportunity, pay and benefits and training and development*

## 1. Introduction

According to Scarlett (2010), employee engagement is a measureable degree of an employee's positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organization which profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform at work. Thus engagement is "a heightened emotional connection that an employee feels for his or her organization, that influences him or her to exert greater discretionary effort to his or her work".

When people are engaged, they employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. Employee engagement heightens the level of ownership where each employee wants to do whatever they can for the benefit of their internal and external customers, and for the success of the organization as a whole. It also improves their relationship with their co-employees.

G4S is amongst the important multinationals active in Kenya providing security and employment opportunities to Kenyan's and playing a pivotal role in commerce and industry through provision of security services. G4S has over 15,000 employees spread in 100 locations country wide. As a service provider its greatest competitive advantage is its human resource. Employee engagement therefore is a critical pillar in ensuring it meets its objective of providing high quality services and attaining its mission of being the preferred security solutions provider in Kenya. In the recent past it had been confronted by myriad of challenges regarding quality of service delivery especially in cash in transit with above average incidents of cash heists attributed to compromised staff integrity and collusion with third parties (Kenya Police Annual Crime Report, 2010). The study aimed at investigating the factors that affect employee engagement in G4S Security Services Kenya Limited.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The study objectives were to: describe the effect of training and development on employee engagement in private security organizations, analyze the effect of recognition by immediate manager on employee engagement in private security organizations, explore the effect of communication on employee engagement in private security organizations, examine the effect of equal opportunity on employee engagement in private security organizations and examine the effect of pay and benefits on employee engagement in private security organizations.

## 3. Review of Literature

### 3.1. Theoretical Framework

Maslow's (1970) theory of motivation provides a framework for understanding basic human needs and gives context to the conceptualization of employee engagement and disengagement. Latham and Ernest (2006) confirm the necessity for understanding human needs as it relates to engagement at work as conceptualized in Maslow's (1970) motivation theory.

### 3.2. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement predicts positive organizational outcomes, including productivity, job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, low turnover intention, customer satisfaction, return on assets, profits and shareholder value (Bakker et al., 2003; Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008; Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Engagement affects the mindset of employees and relates to personal initiative and learning. Furthermore, it fuels discretionary efforts and concerns for quality (Salanova, Llorens, Cifre, Martinez & Schaufeli, 2003). There is a clear and mounting evidence that high levels of employee engagement keenly correlates to individual, group and corporate performance in areas such as retention, turnover, productivity, customer service and loyalty. And this is not just by small margins. While differences varied from study to study, highly engaged employees outperform their disengaged counterparts by a whopping 20 – 28 percentage points (Gibbons, 2006).

Engagement can enable organizations to retain their employees' support while taking and implementing difficult decisions. Key to this is ensuring that the senior management team effectively communicates a clear, consistent and compelling case for change and encourages feedback from staff to ensure that they understand and take on board messages (Dessler, 2008).

Engaged employees feel a strong emotional bond to the organization that employs them. This is associated with people demonstrating willingness to recommend the organization to others and commit time and effort to help the organization succeed.

The factors that determine engagement are primarily driven by the organisation, and it is the extent to which the organisation takes these issues on board and addresses them in an effective manner that will influence engagement levels. Engagement is a two-way process and whilst engagement is organisation-led, it requires inputs from the employee as well. These factors are training and development, recognition by immediate manager, effective communication, equal opportunity and pay and benefits. The said factors are seen to be related to engagement as shown in the conceptual framework.
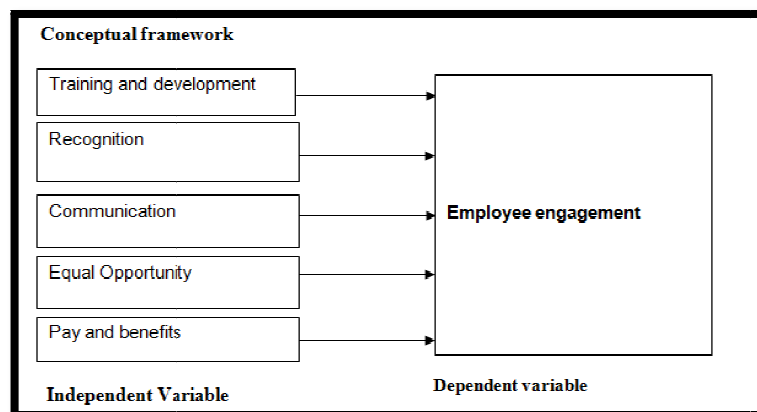


*Figure 1: Conceptual Framework*

## 4. Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design. The population consisted all G4S employees working in Kenya representing Private Security organizations. The target population comprised 600 employees from the head office. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain a sample of 100 respondents as shown in Table 1.

| Description | Male | Female | Sub Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cash Service Division | 16 | 14 | 30 |
| Guarding Division | 15 | 15 | 30 |
| Courier Division | 13 | 7 | 20 |
| Security Systems Division | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| Administration | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| Grand Total | 56 | 44 | 100 |

*Table 1: The Distribution of the Sample as Per Division*

The instrument for the study comprised of a questionnaire that contained variables or factors that according to Gallup and Robinson model measure the core elements of employee engagement.

## 5. Findings

*5.1. Effect of Training and Development on Employee Engagement*

Table 2 shows a summary of the responses of the employees

| Item | Strongly Agree % | Agree % | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| i. Training and development is highly emphasized by management. | 21 | 23 | 44 | 12 |
| ii. Adequate resources for training and development are provided | 13 | 27 | 39 | 19 |
| iii. Training and development provided has greatly improved my work performance. | 26 | 47 | 18 | 9 |
| iv. Training and development plays a major role in my career development in the organization | 45 | 32 | 16 | 7 |
| v. Training and development has impacted on my engagement to the organization | 52 | 26 | 16 | 6 |

*Table 2: Effect of Training and Development*

44% of the respondent agreed that training and development is highly emphasized by management, while 56% disagreed. 40% agreed that adequate resources for training and development are provided while 58% disagreed. 73% agreed that their work performance has improved as a result of training provided. This supports Truss et al. (2008) findings that the extent to which employees believed that they had improved their skills and capabilities was identified as a driver of engagement. 77% believed the training they have attained plays a major role in their career development in the organization while 78% reported that training and development has had an impact on their engagement to the organization. Therefore, training and development is seen as a major factor that affects employee engagement inthe private security organization.

*5.2. Effect of Recognition by Immediate Manager on Employee Engagement*

| Item | Strongly Agree % | Agree% | Disagree % | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| i. Manager often gives appreciation for discretionary performance. | 32 | 33 | 24 | **11** |
| ii. Manager provides positive feedback on achievement of assignment. | 21 | 27 | 35 | **17** |
| iii. Manager provides performance incentives fairly based on merit. | 23 | 18 | 28 | **31** |
| iv. Manager encourages team work and peer review. | 28 | 36 | 29 | 7 |
| v. Recognition by my manager has affected my engagement | 44 | 26 | 19 | 11 |

*Table 3: The Effect of Recognition by Immediate Manager*

65% agreed that they received appreciation for discretionary performance while 48% stated that they received positive feedback on achievement of an assignment. 64% reported that the immediate manager encourages teamwork, while 59% disagreed with the notion that provision of performance incentives on merit. Of the 59% who disagreed, 31% were operational staff, 23 % supervisory staff and 5% administrative staff. This is mainly the cadres who are not covered by performance bonus. There was no significant gender variance in the responses. 78% of the respondents agreed that recognition in the organization had affected their engagement to the organization. The findings show that recognition by immediate manager influences employee engagement in the G4S company. This supports Perrin (2003) findings that recognizing employee's performance by immediate manager increases employees giving favorable scores of engagement from 33% to 52%.

### 5.3. Effect of Communication on Employee Engagement

| Item | Strongly agree % | Agree % | Disagree % | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| i. There is clarity provided by mode of communication in the organization. | 23 | 25 | 32 | 20 |
| ii. Two-way communication is practiced at all levels in the organization. | 18 | 13 | 41 | 28 |
| iii. Open communication enables employees to participate in decisions. | 15 | 21 | 39 | 25 |
| iv. Regular communication forums provide an avenue of cascading organization strategy to employees. | 26 | 27 | 33 | 14 |
| v. Effective communication has affected my engagement to the organization | 43 | 31 | 17 | 9 |

*Table 4: The Effect of Communication*

48% of the respondents indicated the mode of communication in the organization provided clarity while 52% disagreed. The mode of communication due to historical nature of security services is mainly top-down characterized by orders and command or instruction givers and receivers as respondents stated in the general opinion question. This could explain why majority felt open communication in the organization does not enable employees to participate in decisions on issues affecting them.

Only 31% agreed that two-way communication is practiced at all levels of the organization while 69% disagreed. 36% feel the open communication in the organization enables employees to participate in decisions on issues affecting them while 64% disagreed. 53% of the respondents agreed that regular communication forums provide an avenue of cascading organization strategy to employees and their contribution in its achievement thus high level of engagement. 64% of the respondents reported that effective communication had affected their engagement to the organization. The findings identify communication as a factor that affects employee engagement. This is in support of available literature especially models by Robinson et al. (2004) and Penna (2008) who highlighted that communication is a driver of employee engagement.

### 5.4. Effect of Equal Opportunity on Employee Engagement

| Item | Strongly Agree % | Agree% | Disagree % | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| i. The organization practices equal opportunity. | 11 | 17 | 41 | 31 |
| ii. Merit based promotions and opportunities for career growth are evident. | 21 | 27 | 38 | 14 |
| iii. There is equal opportunity for all job applicants. | 28 | 23 | 33 | 16 |
| iv. Effective implementation of diversity and inclusion policies. | 19 | 26 | 26 | 29 |
| v. Embracing of equal opportunity in the organization has affected my engagement | 38 | 31 | 17 | 14 |

*Table 5: Effect of Equal Opportunity*

28% of the respondents agreed the organization practices equal opportunity for all staff that promotes employee engagement while a majority 72% disagreed. Of the 72% who disagreed, 42 were operational staff, 20 supervisory staff, seven administrative and three managerial staff. There was a significant variance based on gender with 63% of females in the sample disagreeing against 37% of the males. On promotions and opportunities for career growth, 48% agreed they are based on merit while 52% disagreed. 51% of the respondents agreed that all job applicants have an equal opportunity for selection based on individual qualification and experience while 49% disagreed. In respect to diversity and inclusion policies, 45% of the respondents agreed they are effectively implemented creating a conducive work environment, while 55% disagreed. There was notable variation on those who disagreed based on cadre of employees with majority being operational staff and gender variations, majority being females. 69% of the respondents agreed that equal opportunity treatment impacts on employee engagement in the organization. The findings show that offering equal opportunity contributes to employee engagement in the organization.

*5.5. Effect of Pay and Benefits on Employee Engagement*

| Item | Strongly Agree % | Agree % | Disagree % | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| i.    Pay and benefit practices are commensurate to individual roles. | 17 | 22 | 43 | 18 |
| ii.    Pay and benefits policies are in place and enforced equitably. | 13 | 24 | 37 | 26 |
| iii.    Above market pay offers the organization a competitive edge. | 24 | 35 | 21 | 18 |
| iv.    Individual performance plays an important role in annual pay and benefits increase. | 9 | 15 | 42 | 34 |
| v.    The pay I receive affects my engagement to the organization | 54 | 29 | 11 | 6 |

*Table 6: The effect of pay and benefits*

61% of the respondents disagreed that the organizational pay and benefit practices are commensurate to individual roles thus promoting engagement while 39% agreed. The highest proportions of respondents were operational staff with 51% being young staff between 20-30yrs, and 76% being of lower cadre at operational and supervisory level. Majority of operational and supervisory staff actually disagreed. The response is in line with the hierarchy of needs of the category of respondents. Pay and benefits are of major concern to the workers. On the statement whether pay and benefits policies are in place and enforced equitably, 63% disagreed while37% agreed.69% agreed that above market pay offers the organization a competitive edge.83% agreed that the pay they received affected their engagement to the organization. Pay and benefits was found to influence employee engagement.

On the general comment about pay and benefits, 65% stated their pay and benefit was inadequate and does not meet most of their daily needs.  21% stated the pay and benefit was low and hindered them from seeking opportunities to improve themselves for example by going back for further studies, while 10% stated they are forced to carry out other income generating activities like shoe repairs at the estate and tailoring to make ends meet amongst others.

*5.6. Other Factors Affecting Employee Engagement*

The study also identified other factors that affect employee engagement. These are performance appraisal, job security, health and safety, pride in the organization and good management practice. Health and safety falls under hygiene factors that would be contractual in nature aimed at providing a satisfactory work environment.

## 6. Conclusions

The study findings are that the level of employee engagement is low and far from required threshold. Lack of sufficient equipment for employees to do their job, low valuing of employees views and ideas, practices that do not promote equal opportunity, lack of effective communication, low job satisfaction and lack of pride in the organization have great implication to employee engagement and elicited low score in the study. The findings also established that employees have low level of confidence in the senior managers in the organization and the fact that most employees are not proud to work for the organization.

It was established that training and development, recognition by immediate manager, communication, equal opportunity and pay and benefits affect employee engagement in the private security organization. However, these factors have not been adequately implemented thereby registering low level of employee engagement.

## 7. Recommendations

- The management of organization needs to put adequate emphasis on training and development and resources provided for training need to be increased. Fair allocation of training slots to many employees also needs to be implemented instead of concentrating training to a few individuals. The training policy also needs to be cascaded to all employees to enable them appreciate and understand their involvement in training and their rights.
- Recognition initiatives need to be revamped to provide fairness and merit in provision of performance incentives. Additionally, the bonus scheme should be administered equitably.
- The organization needs to address the mode of communication in the organization to provide for clarity, enhance two-way communication across the organization as well as institute mechanisms to enable employees to participate in decision making through open communication. In addition, valuing employee's opinion at work is an area that needs concerted effort. Communication channels need to be opened up for top down and bottom up communication to seal the void identified.
- Equal opportunities policies should be implemented to address the concerns raised in the study and boost the employees' confidence on fair treatment which could improve employee engagement.

## 8. Areas for Further Research

Only five factors that affect employee engagement were studied in depth. Other factors as identified through the respondents should be included in future studies. The future studies should focus on effect of job security, performance appraisal, health and safety, pride in the organization and good management practices on employee engagement.This will provide a wider scope on the effect of employee engagement to the private security organization.

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