

## CHALLENGES FACING CHURCH WORKERS IN KENYA

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### Abstract:-

*Kenya has many church denominations each with distinct approaches to Christian faith but guided by the common goal of service to God and humanity. The achievement of this goal is actualised through the principles of volunteerism and selfless giving. The volunteerism mentality and the need for employees to work on Sundays has profound impact on how professionals and other church workers are treated. The aim of this study was to establish the challenges that affect performance of church workers in Kenya. Specifically the study examined the various unconventional working conditions under which church workers perform and how these conditions affect their performance. This study used the case study research design. The Christ is the Answer Ministry (CITAM) was used as the case. The CITAM was purposively selected because it is one of the modern upcoming mission churches within a wider Pentecostal churches fraternity. The total population which comprises of all the staff members of CITAM headquarters was studied. The staff members include both the clergy and the professionals. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Secondary data was also used. The data was then analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The findings revealed that indeed church employees are expected to perform in unique working conditions including working over the weekends and long hours. Subsequently, there is a preference to recruit employees from the same church leading to faith based discrimination in recruitment. Based on the findings, it was recommended that there should be a balance between recruitment of the church members and members of other denominations but with the two thirds rule strictly adhered to. There also should be professionalism and that volunteerism should not be imposed. The non-members should not be required to work on Sundays or on the days when they should be worshipping in their own churches.*

**Key Words:-***Church Workers, Clergy, Religious Discrimination*

## **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The church of today is an employer guided by principles of ethics and fairness. Equally present however is the mindset that the employees of the church are voluntarily workers with the desire to serve God and humanity. This mentality is reflected in the poor wages and the unconventional working conditions the church workers are subjected to, yet the church is expected to preach and practice justice and fairness. The church should strive to be more than just an ordinary not-for-profit organisation, it must use the best practices and procedures available, weave them into the church's mission as servants, and offer favourable ministry and work environment (Hanna 2008).

The church is guided by a set of ethics which serve a group of people who share common values, beliefs and interests. This means that a church worker who prescribes to a different faith and is a member of different church may fail to fit into the systems of the church where he/she works. This may result to faith based discrimination in recruitment and/or in promotion leading to poor performance and poor services to the members the church serves. There is therefore a need to examine the challenges faced by the church workers with an aim of developing a set of recommendations which may guide in better treatment of the employees and better services to the churches.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Quality of employment in terms of remuneration, compensation, work hours and working conditions should be provided by the employer for all workers. While the church principles teach equality of all human beings, this principle is not practiced within the ranks of the church leadership and church management. Church workers are not always treated equally and some have to work on weekends especially on Sundays which is outside the official working days in Kenya. Where the workers are not congregants of that particular church, they may feel unfairly treated. To conceal the feeling of unfair treatment and to promote volunteerism within the workforce, many churches in Kenya prefer to recruit employees from among their congregants subsequently leading to discrimination in recruitment and contravention of the two thirds rule entrenched in the Kenyan Constitution, 2010 and the Employment Act, 2007. The church as an employer in Kenya today is faced with myriad of challenges including inadequate financial support, lack of appropriate human resource policies, staff shortages, limited volunteer base, and poor leadership which affect the performance of its employees. These challenges have led to poor human resource practices which may affect the performance of the workers and subsequently the quality of services offered by the church to its congregants. There is therefore a dire need to study the challenges facing the church workers and propose remedies to these challenges. However while management researchers have analysed challenges and enumerated solutions in profit based organizations very little has been written on church employment environments hence the need for this study.

### **Research Objectives**

The general objective of this study was to examine organisational challenges that church workers face which may affect their performance.

The Specific objectives of the study were:

1. To examine the working conditions of Church employees in Kenya.
2. To determine if faith based discrimination in recruitment and promotion exists in churches in Kenya
3. To determine whether working conditions and faith based discrimination may affect the employees' performance
4. To establish recommendations of how the performance of church workers can be improved in the context of volunteerism.

### **Justification and significance of the study**

There is need to fill the knowledge gap on the factors affecting the performance of church workers in Kenya. The findings of this research will serve as a guideline that will help churches improve the management of human resources and subsequently the quality of services offered by the churches to the community. The findings of this research may also provide data for future researches especially in the field of management and church leadership.

### **Literature Review**

The working conditions of a church worker vary from one church to another depending on the size of the church and the nature of the job that the worker holds. Working conditions can be complicated by the lack of clear job specification for the pastoral team and other church workers (Bixby 1997). While the primary motivation for most church workers is service to God, (Godevenos, 2003) the workers should be paid and give right working conditions in recognition of the responsibilities and requirements of the position (United Church of Canada, 2009). According to ACCER (2002) the Church employees should be encouraged and enabled to see their work not merely as a source of income, but as providing a service and a benefit to others in society and, in its ultimate sense, the mission of the Church. This should foster the development of personal accountability for the work to be undertaken, based on the concept of the good citizen who sees that his or her efforts have greater meaning and value in respect of the common good. This gives responsibility to the Church leaders who should be careful in how they handle the staff of their churches. This is because apart from the individual aspects mentioned above, there are also ethical and moral issues that affect them. When churches fail to handle their human resources well they find themselves in battles but those who handle their staff well they find that they are able to safeguard their ministries as well as the members of staff as well.

Religious discrimination involves treating persons unfavourably because of their religious beliefs. In the USA, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) registered an increase in religious discrimination claims from 2880 in

2007 to 3386 in 2009). Eliminating discrimination helps to improve employee retention, and performance, it gives everyone an equal chance to work and develop their skills and abilities (ACAS 2005). In Kenya, the Employment Act, 2007 states that no employer shall discriminate directly or indirectly against an employee or prospective employee or harass an employee or prospective employee on grounds of religion among other factors. Faith based discrimination results in poor performance because employee's job satisfaction, loyalty and retention and commitment is reduced.

It is important that a church treats worker fairly not only because it is a legal requirement but also because they are advocates of human rights. The church for many years has called for institutions to respect the dignity of human life and as such should be an example. They are also be governed by ethics of fairness. The aim of this study was to examine the working environment of the church workers, including the working condition and discrimination in recruitment and promotion and proposing remedies which may help churches offer fair treatment to their employees.

**Research Methodology**

The research utilized the case study design. The CITAM was purposively selected because it is a modern upcoming mission churches within a wider Pentecostal churches fraternity. The CITAM headquarter was purposively selected because it has the largest number of full time employees and also because it is where all the employment, administrative functions of all assemblies are done. These employees are from the following departments': pastoral office (clergy), business development and strategy, finance, human resource, ICT, internal audit, media and communications, operations and procurement and logistics. Questionnaires and Interview schedules were to be used for data collection. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS.

**The study findings Analysis of response rate**

The researcher distributed a total of 400 questionnaires out of which 82.6% were returned.

**Religious affiliation of respondents**

All the respondents were Pentecostals. However not all respondents were members of CITAM, (Table 1). Since CITAM is a Pentecost affiliate, it means that it only recruited workers who were in agreement with its Statement of Faith.

**Table 1: CITAM membership**

Membership	Percentage
CITAM members	79%
Non CITAM members	21%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: survey data 2014)

As shown on Table 1, CITAM members formed 79% of the respondents while only 21% were not members of CITAM. This shows that the church had preference to employees who professed its own faith. It was however also open for members from other Christian faiths.

**Working conditions of church employees in Kenya**

The first objective of this study sought to look at the working conditions of church workers. To address this objective the study looked into whether the employees worked on Sunday, the number of hours per day worked and whether they were compensated for working on Sundays and for the hours worked as overtime hours.

**Working on Sundays**

Of the respondents interviewed, 42% worked on Sundays, 42% of respondents did not work on Sundays and 16% worked on Sunday not as a matter of routine but only when called upon to. As shown on table 2 below, of those who worked on Sundays, 78% were members of CITAM while 22% were non-members.

**Table 2: Employee work on Sunday**

		Members of CITAM	Non members
		%	%
Do you work on Sundays	Yes	42%	0%
	No	31%	11%
	Sometimes	5%	11%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>22%</b>

(Source: survey data 2014)

These findings indicate that majority of those who worked on Sundays were actually members of the church and working on Sunday was part of the Sunday service fellowship. Majority of those who worked on Sundays included the clergy, some of the security staff and the secretaries. Asked if working on Sunday would affect their performance, the employees responded as shown on table 3.

**Table 3: Effects of working on Sunday on employee performance**

	Does working on Sunday affect your performance?		
	Yes	No	Total
CITAM members	20%	60%	80%
Non CITAM members	15%	5%	20%
Total	35%	65%	100%

Majority of the respondents (65%) felt that working on Sundays did not affect their performance. Within the classifications however, majority of the non CITAM members felt that working on Sunday would affect their performance. They preferred being in their own churches worshipping other than working in a church they were not affiliated to. A non CITAM member who works on Sunday responded as follows:

Working on Sunday denies me a chance to attend service in my own church. This makes me miss participating in the services or ministries as I would desire. It would be great to have an organisation structure that balances both spiritual and work commitments.

This statement indicates that the non-members were unsatisfied in working on Sundays and this may affect their performance. Requiring employees to work on Sunday affects the performance since it is denying them what is considered a day of worship and rest. The Employment Act 2007 of Kenya entitles every employee a day off in every seven days.

### Hours worked

Of all the respondents who were interviewed, 42% worked 8 hours a day, 26% worked for 10 hours, 11% worked 12 hours and 21% of the employees work for more 12 hours a day. Table 5 below summarises the number of overtime hours worked by CITAM employees per day.

**Table 5: Number of hours per day**

Number of hours worked per day	Hours	%
	8 hours	42
	10hours	26
	12 hours	11
	12+ hours	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	

(Source: survey data 2014)

The difference in work hours or hours worked overtime employees of CITAM was due to the nature of their jobs and their job descriptions. In response to the effects of long working hours, a respondent stated:

One of the challenges I face is having a very big workload which causes me to work an average of two extra hours every day.

These responses show that some employees are overworked, not satisfied with their work hours and thus their performance is affected by working long hours. Another respondent stated:

... While working long hours pleases my employer, it leaves me exhausted and interferes with the quality of my work. For instance, I make more typing errors in the evenings than in the morning.

The employees interviewed were willing to put in extra hours based on the job requirements but they all agreed that long working affected the quality of their work. Golden (2011) agrees that working long hours may reflect an employee's work ethics and commitment to work. Long working hours may interfere not only with the quality of life but also with job performance by the employees. According to CDC (2004), overtime was associated with poorer perceived general health and increased injury rates. Also individuals who work overtime performed poorly in the areas of tests of cognitive function (vocabulary tasks, pattern memory) and executive function (the ability to prioritize and plan tasks) as compared to those who did not.

### Compensation for working on Sundays

Assessment of whether the employees were compensated for working on Sundays revealed that 47% of employees who worked on Sundays were compensated while 53% were not compensated. Table 7 below summarises these findings.

**Table 1: Compensation for working on Sundays**

Compensation for working on Sunday	%
Yes	47
No	53
Sometimes	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: survey data 2013)

Some of the respondents who stated that they were compensated explained that they were given off days to compensate for working on Sundays. For example the pastors are given off-days on Mondays or Thursdays for working on Sundays. There was no financial compensation. A respondent also stated:

... Compensation given for days worked is not specific and that sometimes the off-days I am given are infringed into by official duties

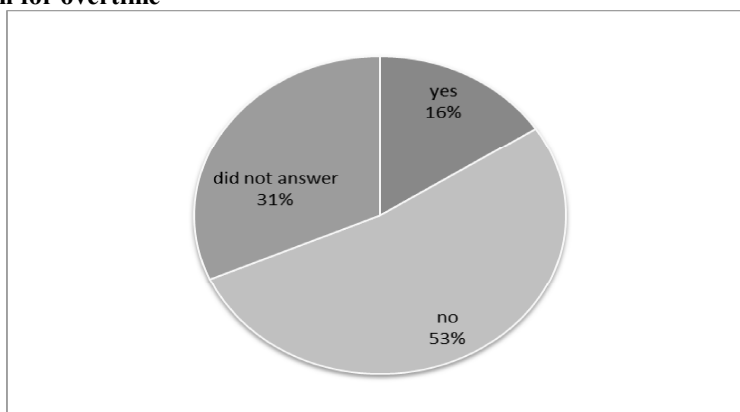
This response shows that the staff members were given off days but they were sometimes given work on those off days. Compensation for working on Sundays is important for the employees who would otherwise work for 6 or 7 days a week. Not compensating employees for working on Sunday will affect the performance of employees.

#### 4.4.2 Compensation for overtime

On the compensation for overtime, the findings revealed that only 16% of employees who worked extra time were compensated for the overtime. More than half of the employees (53%) indicated that they were not compensated for working overtime while 31% did not respond.

Figure 5 below summarises these findings.

**Figure 1: Compensation for overtime**



(Source: survey data 2014)

These findings indicate that majority of the respondents were not compensated for the extra hours performed. Some responses from employee who were not compensated for extra work included:

.... I am not paid for extra work but they pay for my transport...

... Any extra hours I work is considered ministry or service unto God therefore I do not need any compensation...

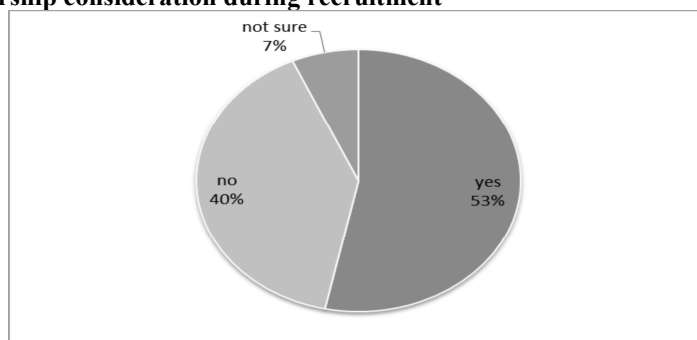
... It is considered as part of the contract and since it is ministry work, one is expected to be resilient and flexible to accommodate any changes or situations that may arise ...

More than half of the employees who put in extra hours are not paid for overtime worked. Asked if lack of compensation affected their work performance, 82% of the employees indicated that the compensation would increase their morale and this would increase their performance. Working overtime without pay greatly contributes to poor performance of employees for it reduces the motivation to work, (Wanjiku, 2009). Wanjiku (2009) reveals that poor working conditions are a cause of high labour turnover. Likewise, reducing the working hours of employees increases their performance (Kossek and Lee 2008). Golden 2011 asserts that standard working hours lead to better performance because the employee has better work/life balance and better health due to reduced stress and fatigue. Workers therefore should be paid in recognition of the responsibilities and requirements of the position they hold (United Church of Canada, 2009). It is therefore important for employers to set reasonable goals and targets which may stretch but not place impossible burdens on them consequently reducing their ability to perform well (Armstrong 2001).

#### Faith-based discrimination in recruitment

Asked if there existed faith based discrimination during their recruitment, 40% stated that their membership to CITAM was not considered during recruitment. Majority (53%) indicated that their membership was a factor in their recruitment while 7% were not sure whether their membership to CITAM played any role in their recruitment. The figure below summarises these findings.

**Figure 2: Role of membership consideration during recruitment**



(Source: survey data 2014)

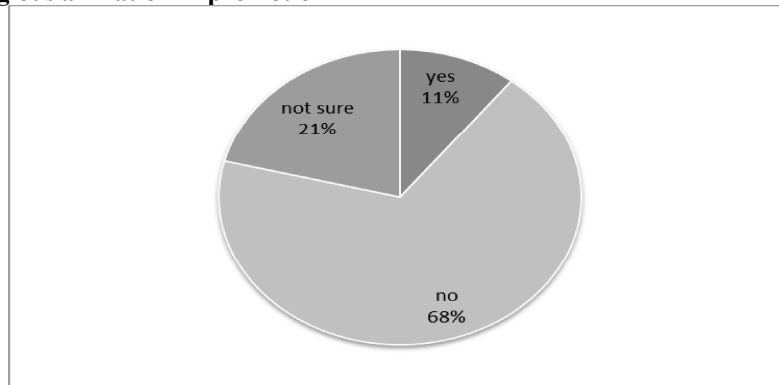
These findings indicate that membership plays a huge role in the recruitment of employees as more than half (53%) agreed that their membership was considered. A respondent stated: Membership of where I fellowshiped was key and I also had to come with an introduction letter from my pastor. The respondent stated that in the recruitment process, the recruitment panel insisted on membership.

Since CITAM is a church, having employees who agree with the faith of the church is a huge determinant before employment especially for clergy based roles. However, for the non-clergy based roles such as accountancy, and security personnel, membership was not directly relevant. Asked if membership affected their performance, the respondents with clergy related roles indicated that they would not fit to work elsewhere and therefore motivated to work at the CITAM. Both member and non-members of CITAM who had the non-clergy related roles indicated that they would be motivated to work in any other organization as they would in CITAM. However, those that were members of CITAM further indicated that loyalty played role in developing their resilient to their jobs. Further, Donaldson (2001) INDICATES that perceived or actual discrimination will affect employee's performance negatively. Perceived or factual discrimination reduces employees' job satisfaction, organisational commitment and loyalty to the organisation. Such an employee will likely not be actively involved in the organisation resulting in reduced performance.

#### 4.5.1 Effects of religious affiliation in promotion

Religious affiliation affected the promotion of the members of the CITAM equally because the entire CITAM clergy was drawn from the members of the CITAM faith. However, for the non-clergy, 11% agrees that their religious affiliation was a determinant in promotion, 68% stated that their religious affiliation did not play any role in their promotion while 21% of the respondents indicated that they were not sure if their religious denomination played any role in promotion. Figure 9 below illustrates these findings.

**Figure 3: Role of religious affiliation in promotion**



(Source: survey data 2013)

The 68% of respondents who said no, indicated that promotion is based purely on merit and performance and that the process was done fairly. Of those who indicated that religious affiliation was a consideration, 75% were in senior positions of their profession. This findings indicated that churches in Kenya were more comfortable with congregates occupying all the top management positions of all the church.

#### Recommendations for the management

Based on the study findings, the following key recommendations were made:

1. Clergy based positions should be reserved for the church members to avoid the conflict of interest which may interfere with the performance of the employees in this positions
2. Duties which are performed on Sundays or days of worship should be reserved for members of that denomination for as long as such arrangements will not negate the two thirds rule as provided in the Kenya Constitution and the Employment Act
3. Professional positions should be open for all and should allow equal opportunities for promotion to the top of the ranks
4. Weekend work should be compensated with off days during the week
5. There should be policies in place which separate voluntarism from professional engagement of the workers
6. Employees who are not members of the church should not work on Sundays to avoid conflict of interest

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