EFFECT OF PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN CONTACT CENTRES: A CASE STUDY OF KENYA POWER

by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS
in Leadership

August 2016
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit.

Signed: ____________________  Date: ____________________
Virginia W. Kariuki

In accordance with PAC University policies, this thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Masters of Arts in Leadership Degree

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family for their unwavering moral and spiritual support and for their guidance.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research proposal would not have been possible without the support of a number of people, who in one way or the other guided me towards my goal. My Thesis supervisor Dr. Percy Opio for his wise counsel and guidance in ensuring I completed the proposal. My colleagues for providing the necessary assistance to ensure I completed this proposal. I am also indebted to my family for their moral support and understanding during the proposal period. Most important, I thank the almighty God for blessing me with strength, health, wisdom and providence of resources to complete this research proposal.
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ABSTRACT

Contact Centres are believed to be the answer to quality customer service due to rapid advance in technology that has led to centralized, faster and efficient delivery of services at reduced cost. Though organizations accrue many benefits from Contact Centres, they have been described as the modern day sweat shop due to excessive performance monitoring and control using technology to ensure efficiency and reduced costs. The study aimed to establish the effect of performance monitoring and the role of employee participation on employee engagement: A case study of Kenya Power Contact Centre. Theoretical and empirical studies were reviewed. The study adopted a census descriptive design with all 120 agents. Data was collected through structured questionnaire that had both open and closed ended questionnaires and the findings analyzed through SPSS and presented through frequency tables, bar charts and pie charts. The study established that intensive performance and lack of employee participation had a negative effect on employee engagement with agents having no passion, enthusiasm and energy for work. This led to stress, burnout, and absenteeism, manipulation of the system, poor customer service and turnover. The study established that intensive performance monitoring led to unrealistic targets, work pressure, conflict of quantity of calls over quality of calls, low autonomy and lack of supervisor support. The study therefore recommends that management should move from authoritarian control style of management to participative style where agents are involved in decision making. The study also recommends reduced intensity of performance monitoring, performance related pay, and improved and positive ways of giving performance feedback to the agents. Finally the study recommends that human resource should implement a policy on the maximum number of years an agent should work in the Contact Centre to reduce burnout due to the emotional labour in Contact Centres. Management should also strive to improve and upgrade the electricity network structure to reduce power outages thus decreasing number of complaints by customers to the Contact Centre. This will greatly enhance engagement, reduce absenteeism and turnover and have a positive impact the quality of customer service offered.
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<td>ACD</td>
<td>Automatic call distribution</td>
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<td>BA</td>
<td>Bargaining agreement</td>
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<td>BPO</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Taylor (2012) defines Contact Centre as a physical location or business operation where high volumes of calls are made or received for the purpose of customer service, technical support, sales or any other specialized business activity. Customers are also served through self-service menus by use of interactive voice recognition (IVR) and multi-media channels such as Facebook, twitter and online chat. Contact Centres were initially known as Call Centres as all work was transacted only over the phone and fax but advances in technology led to the adoption of modern multimedia-based interactions integrating different types of communication channels such as phones and computers, online chatting, email and social media (Leslie, 2010; Cleveland 2012). The first Contact Centre was in the aviation industry in the 1960s (Hillmer, Barbara & McRoberts, 2004). The concept of Contact Centres was not widely accepted in the service industry at first, but the idea has now been globally adapted and Contact Centres are now a significant part of the global economy and are the preferred mode of interaction with customers (Banks & Roodt, 2011).

According to Das, Nandialath & Mohan (2013) Contact Centres now form the cornerstone of the service industry and this is due to advance in technology leading to increased speed of service, shrinking of distance, economies of scale and increased customer satisfaction. In his research, Holman (2005) observed that organizations accrue many benefits from Contact Centres such as reduced costs due to
centralization of functions, increased customer base and customer retention, improved customer service and gathering of customer data through customer relationship management (CRM). Strandberg & Dalin, (2010) point out that by being the primary source of contact for the customer and the link between the customer and the organization; Contact Centres have changed how organizations interact with customers. Customers need not visit organizations and queue to have their queries or complaints addressed but can do so from the comfort of their homes through the use of technology. Technology has led to the integration of telephones and computer, interactive voice response (IVR) and automatic call distribution (ACD), that queues incoming calls and then routes them to the most appropriate agent as per their skill sets (Taylor & Bain, 2007).

Various studies have pointed out that despite the many benefits to the organization, the Contact Centre environment is one of the most stressful work environments and this is due to intensive performance monitoring measures taken to ensure efficiency, reduce costs and adherence (Harry & Coetzee, 2011; Consiglio et al., 2013; Jacobs & Roodt, 2012). Contact Centre jobs are equated to factory jobs or assembly lines based on scientific management theory that advocated for one best way of carrying out a task, deskilling, detailed measurement of performance and output, to control operational efficiency and reduce cost (Choi et al., 2012; Free, 2015). Performance in Contact Centres is based on measurement of both quantity of calls and quality of calls (Borgogni et al., 2012).

The quantity of calls is based on the number of calls an agent picks per shift while quality is based on how the agent interacts with the customer based on the scripts. The
pace of work is determined by technology through the use of ACD that continuously routes calls to agents as long as they are on the ready status (Taylor & Bain, 2007). Research has shown that, Contact Centre work is both mentally and physically stressful, leads to burnout, and has a negative impact on the agent’s wellbeing, satisfaction and engagement. The work is emotionally exhausting, repetitive, heavily scripted and heavily monitored, with low levels of autonomy (Messenger & Goshen, 2010; Harry, 2011; Free, 2015).

1.1.1 Performance Monitoring

According to Armstrong (2009) Performance is a combination of outcomes and outputs and it emphasizes on efficiency and effectiveness. Armstrong continues to say that efficiency is about accomplishing a task within a minimum time, effort and other resources while effectiveness is about producing expected results. Output is the quantity of units produced. One aspect that makes Contact Centres stand out is the use of intensive performance monitoring (Ball, 2010). This is carried out through electronic performance monitoring (EPM) and traditional monitoring whereby live and recorded calls are listen to, so as to measure efficiency, reduce cost, ensure quality and staff adherence (Ball, 2010; Reynolds, 2010). EPM includes surveillance, monitoring, recording, measuring and compilation of work related activities. The nature of work in Contact Centre entails that all calls are recorded for quality purposes (Ball, 2010).

Performance monitoring involves observation and recording of employees work related behaviour with technological assistance (Stanton, 2000). Performance monitoring, measures both the individual performance and performance for the entire Contact Centre (Comcare, 2006). EPM measures both quantity and quality of calls and
records each and every activity of an agent by the second, from the time they log in to the system to the time they log out. Data is generated at the end of the shift and sent to the agents to gauge their performance (Cruz, 2010). Quantity for individual agents refers to the number of calls picked by an agent, duration of the call, the number of times the phone rang before being answered, dropped calls, idle time, duration of lunch, tea and nature call breaks (Banks & Roodt, 2011). For the entire Contact Centre quantity is about service levels attained by the team, calls waiting on queue, longest call waiting in the queue and dropped calls per shift (Banks & Roodt, 2011).

Call monitoring is a continuous process carried out through traditional monitoring whereby quality analysts listen in to live and recorded calls between customers and agents to ensure quality and adherence to scripts that guide an agent on how to dialogue with the customer (Reynolds, 2010). This includes, the tone used by the agent, empathy and professionalism when handling calls. The aim is to gauge employee product knowledge, level of adherence, identify training needs and gather customer data (Wickham & Collins, 2004). Though this is essentially the aim of recording of calls, some studies have shown that in some Contact Centres, call monitoring is used for disciplinary purposes against agents who do not adhere to scripts and laid down regulations (Rothmann, 2008).

1.1.2 Employee Participation

According to Pfeffer (2006) high performing organizations are organizations that have adopted high performance work practices (HPWP) or high involvement work systems that are employee centered and seek to involve employees in decision making while motivating them and increasing productivity. In their study, Wang et al (2011)
observed that in high involvement work systems where employees were encouraged to participate in decision making, the employees found their work more enjoyable and meaningful. This impacted positively on employee engagement, satisfaction, productivity and commitment. When employees participate in decision making, it leads to job enrichment, empowerment, and increased skills and creates a competitive advantage for the organization over its competitors (Huselid, 2010). Participation can be through direct and indirect participation.

According to Nel et al (2005) direct participation is where employees are allowed to take part in decision making, sharing of information that affects their day to day work, sharing of financially rewards from increased productivity and profits and consultation about changes that will impact on the employee’s wellbeing. This includes performance related pay where wages differ based on employee’s performance. Bendix (2010) points out that indirect participation is where the employees participate in decision making through their elected representatives, this may be through the union representatives and participation is through the bargaining agreement (BA) that regulates workplace related issues. According to Batt & Colvin (2011) employee participation in Contact Centre leads to reduced stress, burnout and this in turn, lead to decreased absenteeism, turnover and increased engagement, commitment and performance. Management practices vary across Contact Centres and this depends on the importance given to either the quantity or quality of calls (Holman et al., 2009). Some Contact Centres combine both control and involvement practices.
1.1.3 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement was a concept developed by Kahn (1990). He defined it as harnessing of organization members selves to their work roles. Kruse (2012) defines employee engagement as the emotional commitment that the employee has towards the organization and its goals, resulting to use of efforts by the employee. Engaged employees are enthusiastic and positive about their work, fully involved, loyal and committed to both their work and the organization and hence put in extra effort in their work (Carlier & Grau, 2012). Other researches describe engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind where employees are fully involved and enthusiastic about their work and hence act in a way that promotes their organization’s interest (Braine & Roodt, 2011).

Price (2011) in his research on Contact Centres, points out that since employee engagement is critical to the performance and success of any organization, it ought to be considered highly when planning for a Contact Centre. Engaged employees are an asset to the organization due to their loyalty, passion and commitment. According to Mone & London (2010) management ought to focus on employee needs so as to increase employee engagement. One of the ways to make employee engagement a positive experience is by management focusing on the needs of the employees. As the engagement level increases, absenteeism and turnover levels decrease. West & Dawson (2012) argue that satisfaction and commitment are related to performance but engagement appears as a better predictor of employee performance. A satisfied employee can report to work daily without putting in extra effort at his work.
1.1.4 Kenya Power Company

Kenya Power (KP) is a Limited Liability Company established in 1922 as East African Power & Lighting Company and is currently the only licensed distributor of electricity in Kenya. The company’s mandate is to distribute safe and reliable electricity to Kenyans. The company rebranded in 2011 and changed its name to Kenya Power from Kenya Power and Lighting Company. Customers were initially served from regions in different established emergency and customer service offices at the Kenya Power branches only during the day working hours. In line with the company core values which are customer centered, the National Contact Centre was launched in 2012 as a one stop shop to interact with customers efficiently and effectively on a 24-hour basis. Unlike before where customers could only be served by calling in, customers can now access the Contact Centre through multiple channels such as email, twitter and Facebook (Kenya Power Monthly Customer Base report, 2015).

The Contact Centre was also set up as a way of reducing queues in the banking halls and this has worked well as most customers opt to make queries and complaints through calls, social media or mail. Apart from inbound calls, the Contact Centre also sends outs bulksms to customers informing them on technical breakdowns and delayed power restoration after scheduled line maintenance. The Contact Centre has 120 agents who work on shift and are either employed on permanent or contractual basis.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

From the previous studies, it is apparent that there is a gap as management appears to place greater emphasis on monitoring efficiency based on quantity of calls answered and the speed at which calls are answered, rather than quality of calls (Banks & Roodt,
measurements the agents cannot offer quality service to the customers as they are under time pressure to complete a call and respond to the next caller on the line and thus reduce the calls on queue. The perceived intensity of the performance monitoring and lack of autonomy has the most detrimental effect on workers (Ball, 2010). Contact Centres are the contact point between the customer and the organization and having to deal with agents who are stressed does not grant the customer quality customer service. Therefore the organization needs to pay keen attention to the work design to ensure engagement and increased productivity.

The human aspect is ignored in Contact Centres but there is need to focus on ways to improve employee engagement and change the poor image Contact Centres (Doellgast & Sezer, 2012). Absenteeism and turnover means Contact Centres operate below capacity and this means customers calls take long before being answered leading to increased waiting call queues and increased cost of hiring and training new staff (Ball & Margulis, 2011). The existing literature does not take into consideration the nature of Contact Centres depending on the industry, complexity and nature of operations. Inbound Contact Centres handle more complex and stressful calls than outbound Contact Centres as incoming calls are varied and are mostly on product and service complaints while outbound calls are mostly on sales (Benner & Mane, 2011). None of these studies has researched the effect of intensive monitoring on staff engagement in in-house Contact Centres. Contact Centres are a fairly new phenomenon in Kenya and none of the existing studies have researched on the role of employee participation as a mediator between performance monitoring and employee engagement.
This study will be relevant as it will add to the academic knowledge and stimulate further research on employee engagement. The study will therefore, endeavor to find out the effects of performance monitoring measures and how employee participation affects the relationship between performance monitoring and employee engagement in in-house Contact Centres. Apart from cost reduction, one other key reason Contact Centres are set up by organizations is to increase customer satisfaction but are they really achieving what they were set out to achieve amidst the intensive control measures that lead to stress, burnout, absenteeism and impact negatively on employees? Can employees who have no control over their work service customers effectively?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The research sought to find out effect of performance monitoring and employee participation on employee engagement in Contact Centres.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study shall be to establish the effect of Performance monitoring and employee participation on employee engagement at the Kenya Power Contact Centre.

The specific objectives are to:

i. To determine the performance monitoring measures used in Kenya Power Contact Centre to ensure efficiency.

ii. To establish if agents participate in decisions concerning their work

iii. To determine employee engagement at the Contact centre

iv. To establish interventions that enhances employee engagement at the Contact Centre.
1.5 Research Questions

i. What are the performance monitoring measures used in Kenya Power Contact Centre to ensure efficiency?

ii. In what ways do agents participate in decision making in the Contact Centre?

iii. What is the employee engagement level at the Contact centre?

iv. What are the interventions that can enhance staff engagement at Kenya Power Contact Centre?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will provide a reliable understanding of effects of performance monitoring measures in Contact Centres and how employee participation can increase employee engagement. Bakker & Demerouti (2007) point out that supervisor support, co-worker support, performance feedback and autonomy can act as a buffer to assist Contact Centre employees to cope with job demands, burnout, stress and other health issues that lead to dissatisfaction. There is no previous research locally on how performance monitoring in in-house Contact Centres affects employee engagement or how participation affects the relationship between performance monitoring and engagement. The findings of this study will enable management in in-house Contact Centres come up with ways to motivate agents and increase employee engagement. Use of technology should be tailored towards providing greater staff engagement at Contact Centres. The findings of this study will form part of references material in future to researchers and policy implementers in companies adapting Contact Centre Concept and also Kenya Power policy developers.
1.7 Scope of the Study

The proposed study will be conducted at Kenya Power Contact Centre in Nairobi which is an in-house and an inbound Contact Centre. The study will be limited to staff working at the Contact Centre and will include the quality analysts, supervisors and agents. The collection of the data will only take place with Contact Centre staff at appointed times before or after their shifts during the day. Further, collection of the data will not be limited to a single shift but to all shifts within the day.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

Owing to time and financial limitation this study will be carried out in one in-house Contact Centre, which only deals with inbound calls and other multimedia channels. The second limitation is that the Contact Centre chosen for this study is in-house and not outsourced therefore the challenges observed might not be the same as those of an outsourced or offshore Contact Centres. The third limitation is that as agents work on shifts it might not be easy getting all the agents during the day hours.

1.9 Assumptions

An assumption in the proposed study is that Kenya Power management will grant the necessary permission to allow collection of the primary data. Another assumption is that the respondents will fully understand the questions asked in the questionnaire and accept to respond to the questions comprehensively. Therespondentswill be honest in their answers due to confidentiality assurance.

Summary of the Chapter

In chapter one, an overview of the problem is discussed, this chapter provides a brief overview and background information on Contact Centres. Performance monitoring,
employee participation and employee engagement in Contact Centres are discussed. The chapter has also set out the statement of the problem, objectives of the study and the research questions. The justification and scope of the study, limitations and assumptions of the study have also been outlined.

Operational Definitions

Agents
An agent is an employee in the Contact Centre who makes or receives calls from customers (D’alleo & Santangello, 2011). Agents may also deal with customers on social media and through customer care mails.

Average Handling Time
The amount of time an agent takes in dealing with all aspects of a call and includes talk time and after call work.

Burnout
It is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and negative attitude and reduced profession efficacy, disengagement (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Employees are tired, uninvolved and ineffective (Weiner & Graighead, 2010).

Employee Engagement
Employee engagement is the situation where the employee is fully involved, committed and enthusiastic about their work. They are positive about their work and organization and go the extra mile to achieve results in their work (Carlier & Grau, 2012).

Job Autonomy
It is the degree to which a job provides substantial freedom, independence and discretion to the individual in scheduling their work and in determining the procedures to be used when carrying out their work (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

Job Demands

Job demands are the physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and psychological effort from the employee (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Scripting

Scripting is the mechanizing of business processes through automated tools or orchestrated responses to reduce operating costs (Baranoswki et al., 2012).

Stress

Stress is a pattern of reactions and occurs when employees can’t cope with Job demands and where there is a mismatch of skills, knowledge and abilities (Adorno, 2012; Sharma, 2011).

Performance Monitoring

Performance monitoring involves observing, examination and recording of employee related work behavior with or without technological assistance (Stanton, 2000).

Performance Targets

Performance targets represent the level of performance that the organization aims to achieve from a particular activity (Comcare, 2006)
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review existing theoretical and empirical literature and the conceptual framework on Contact Centre performance monitoring and its impact on employee engagement in Contact Centres. The chapter will also review the role of employee participation as a moderator between performance monitoring and employee engagement. The chapter will guide in the understanding of the relationship between the independent variable which is performance monitoring, the moderating effect of employee participation and the dependent variable which is employee engagement.

2.1 Job Demand -Resource Model

The job demand resource model, (JD-R Model) is a model used to examine and explain employee burnout, engagement and organizational performance and can be used in various occupations (Schaufeli, 2013, Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). The model is important as it shows how and why different employees respond differently to their work and explains employees attitudes and behaviour (Shantz et al, 2013). The model points out two factors that affect employee engagement and these include; job demands and job resources (Schaufeli, 2013). According to the model both job resources and job demands play a role in stimulating employee’s motivation and enhance engagement and commitment (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).
The model shows that engagement has three dimensions; vigour, dedication and absorption. Vigour is characterized by high energy levels while working, the zeal to persist in difficult times and the willingness to exert effort, dedication means being involved and having a sense of inspiration and pride in ones work (Schaufeli & Bakker,
They continue to say that absorption is being fully immersed and engrossed in work and being unable to detach from one’s work. Vigour and dedication are the direct opposites of exhaustion and mental distance which describe burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

According to the model, job resources are the strongest predictors of engagement and include the physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that help in achieving the work goals (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Job demands include; autonomy, performance feedback, role clarity, skill variety, social support and supervisor support (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Job resources have the potential to stimulate personal growth, development and learning and play a part in reducing the health impairing impact of job demands (Schaufeli, 2013). Job resources also include personal aspects such as, hope, resilience, optimism and self-efficacy (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). This study will not include personal resources in the research.

Job demands on the other hand are the physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and psychological effort by the employee; they are the strongest predictors of exhaustion and burnout and are negatively related to engagement (Schaufeli, 2013). Job demands include mental and emotional demands, physical demands and work pressure (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Although job demands are not necessarily negative, they can develop into ‘stressors’ if they require the employee to put in too much effort in order to meet these demands (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Increased job demands and low job resources eventually lead to stress and burnout and burnout leads to gradual erosion of engagement (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Job demands on the other hand include demands such as mental, emotional, physical demands
and work pressure; these are the strongest predictors of exhaustion and burnout (Schaufeli, 2013). Increased job demands and low job resources eventually lead to stress and burnout (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

2.1.1 Labour Process Theory (LPT)

Contact Centre work design is based on the labour process theory by Braverman (1974). How managerial control is established and maintained was the key focus of LPT. Braverman based his work on the capitalist system where the workers power was controlled and owned by the capitalist or the owner in order to generate profit for the capitalist. To do this Braverman (1974) pointed out that the capitalist applied scientific theory or Taylorism in order to reduce costs, increase efficiency and increase productivity and this is what he referred to as the labour process theory. He pointed out that the capitalist emphasized on deskilling, detailed measurement of performance and output to control efficiency and lower operational costs. Harry Braverman (1974) based his theory on scientific theory by Taylor that was about one best way of doing things to improve efficiency and reduce costs (Braverman, 1974). The one best way was through deskilling, measuring, control and breaking down of task to smaller repetitive tasks in order to increase efficiency, reduce cost and increase productivity but Braverman emphasized on deskilling and control through the use of technology.

LPT focused on the strict separation of conception and execution whereby conception and planning of work was left for management and workers only role was execution of routine tasks. LPT also focused on standardization by dividing tasks into smaller and closely monitored sub tasks (Braverman, 1974). Braverman pointed out monopoly of knowledge by the management where knowledge on how to carry out the
task was upon the supervisor and not the worker (Braverman, 1974). This to Braverman was essential in establishing and maintaining managerial power and control. According to Braverman advances in technology gave management opportunities to reduce skill and discretion and tighten surveillance and control over workers. This theory focuses on management’s use of technology to achieve efficiency and states that technology is a political tool used by managers to maintain their position power, manipulate employees and the conditions in which they work (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013).

LPT and new technology has resulted in deskilling of craft and administrative workers (Braverman, 1974). According to Braverman (1974), improved control through technology led to efficiency, lower operational costs and higher profits. Taylor and Bain (1999) were the first researchers to compare and draw attention to the intensive control systems used in the Contact Centres, they emphasized that the technology in use offered a unique labour process for service delivery. Taylor & Bain (1999) likened queuing of calls to ‘an assembly line in the head’ where workers had little control over the rate at which they answered calls. The automated process in the assembly line determined the pace of work and this is similar to how technology determines the pace of work in Contact Centres by continuously channeling calls to agents through as Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) or routers (Taylor, 2013).

Advances and adoption of technology in Contact Centres has allowed managerial control to be rendered perfect (Fernie & Metcalf, 1998). Introduction of new technology has led to new work methods and greater control over work and increased work intensity (Marx, 2010). Due to LPT Contact Centres are compared to mass production assembly lines which require minimal skills, with no discretion but only repetitive and monotonous
tasks (Banks & Roodt, 2011). Contact Centres possess many features of LPT which calls for monitoring and control of workers to ensure efficiency and reduced costs. Several studies conducted have found out that Contact Centre is all about efficiency and work is pressurized, highly paced and management is primarily concerned with cost minimization and productivity just as advocated by LPT (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013; Taylor, 2013).

Several researchers have criticized LPT and note that Contact Centre work does not mirror factory assembly line work (Burawoy, 1979; Finchnam & Rhodes, 2005; Noon & Blyton, 2007). They argued that LPT ignored alternative management strategies, treated workers as passive and overstated management’s objective of controlling labour. According to Russell, (2009) Contact Centre workers need to have an understanding of their organization’s products, systems and processes in order to serve customers and hence have more responsibilities, while workers in the assembly line don’t need to have such an understanding of their organization. Other critics emphasized on up skilling and job autonomy with the introduction of new technologies (Boreham et al, 2008).

2.2 Contact Centres

Contact Centres are an integral part of most industries and are strategically set up to be the primary source of contact for the customers and to offer service based competitive edge over competitors (Callaghan & Thompson, 2001). Contact Centres are now the major method by which organizations communicate with their customers and operate in all industries; banking, telemarketing, hospitality, insurance and other business processes (Messenger & Goshen, 2010). There has been exponential growth of Contact Centres spurred by rapid developments in technology both in the developing and developed countries and this is set to continue (Messenger & Goshen, 2010). Contact
Centres are changing the way organizations communicate with their customers and organizations that are focused on customer loyalty adapt the Contact Centre concept as a strategic asset to differentiate their products and services and drive customer satisfaction (Marr & Neely, 2004). Contact Centres form the heart of successful customer relationship management strategies as they enable organizations to build, maintain and manage customer relationships by being available 24 hours, 7 days a week and 365 days of the year to solve complaints and give information to customers (Marr & Neely, 2004).

A number of studies have however indicated the negative aspects of Contact Centres, which include; increased health issues, decreased motivation, high stress levels, burnout, absenteeism, high staff turnover and disengagement (Wallace et al., 2000; Jensen & Raver, 2012). Health issues include ears and throat problems due to continuous calls routed without a break, eyes, back and wrist problems as agents have to work with computers and sit for long without moving (Jensen & Raver, 2012). In a study in Australian Contact Centres, agents were found to have encountered psychological pressures due to high work intensity (Bohle et al., 2011). Wanja (2014) quoted (SFC workforce management, 2016) which showed that Safaricom Contact Centre had an average absenteeism rate of 39% which was high compared to other department’s absenteeism rate of 8% to 11% within the same period.

In New Zealand, research study reveals that agents were under stress due to the nature of work and this led to burnout and high turnover (Rod & Ashill, 2012). Due to high stress levels Contact Centres have the highest turnover rates compared to any other work and Indian Contact Centres have the highest employee turnover of forty percent against a global average of twenty percent (Holman et al., 2007). There is conflict and
tension in Contact Centres between the imperative to maximize call volumes and the need to provide excellent customer service; this is reflected in qualitative and quantitative monitoring and imposition of performance targets (Bain et al., 2006). Taylor & Bain (1999) call the integration of technology and information “Taylorisation of white-collar work”, characterized by an increase in the manager’s power, and highly fragmented tasks, lack of job autonomy and extensive control and monitoring of employees.

Frenkil et al (1998) referred to this as “Informative control.” Due to deskillling, lack of autonomy and intensive monitoring applied to ensure efficiency, Contact Centres have aptly been described as the modern day electronic sweatshop, satanic mills and assembly lines in the head (Fernie & Metcalf, 1998; Taylor & Bain, 2000; Harry & Coetzee, 2011). A study by Noronha & D’Cruz (2009) of international Contact Centre agents in Bangalore and Mumbai shares the view that technology is one of the elements in managerial designs of control (Free, 2015). Literature points out that Contact Centre job demands, performance monitoring and lack of supervisor support leads to job dissatisfaction and disengaged employees (Alge & Hansen, 2014). Supervisory behavior has an impact on individual response to monitoring (Ball & Margulis, 2011). According to a research conducted in Ireland, Contact Centres would stand to gain by using proactive and supportive managerial approach that incorporates empowerment (Gilmore, 2001).

2.2.1 Types of Contact Centers

There are two types of Contact Centers and these are: Outbound Contact Centres mostly for sales and services and inbound Contact Centres for customer complaints
enquires and technical support (White & Roos, 2007). Contact Centres are heterogeneous organizations that offer different types of services and taking a variety of forms (Bishop et al., 2003). An organization’s Contact Centre can be in-house, where a company uses its own structure and resources to run the Contact Centre or it can be outsourced. Outsourced Contact Centres can be within the same country of offshore, located in another country. Most organizations are now opting for outsourcing through Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) to cut down on operational cost (Harris, 2012). BPO is transferring of operational and supporting processes to other companies that specialize in undertaking responsibility for information-intensive business processes for their clients (Naidoo & Neville, 2005).

India is the most preferred choice for offshore Contact Centers due to availability of English-speaking trained professionals and low labour costs, over 400 of the Fortune 500 companies have their Contact Centres in India (Budhwar et al., 2009). In Africa, South Africa and Kenya are the most prominent players in BPO (Banks & Roodt, 2011; Waema et al., 2009). South Africa has the highest number of Contact Centres (Thompson, 2013). The first in-house Contact Centres were set up by financial services companies in Cape Town in the mid-1980s (Pandy & Rogerson, 2012). The industry has grown by 35% each year in the last five years in South Africa, but mostly due to BPO (Cohen, 2013). Apart from BPO Contact Centres, there has also been phenomenal growth of in house Contact Centres in South Africa (Banks & Roodt, 2011).
2.2.2 Contact Centres in Kenya

Development of Contact Centres in Kenya is a fairly new phenomenon. The first offshore Contact Center to be set up was Kencall in 2005, this was soon followed by other offshore Contact Centres such as Horizon, Techno brain, Direct Channel, Spanco Raps, Adept and Gorilla BPO among others (Free, 2015). Service oriented organizations in Kenya, and telecommunication companies like Safaricom, Airtel and orange have set up in-house Contact Centres to serve their customers effectively. Others include aviation industry, banking industry, media houses, Kenya Police, insurance firms, utility companies and even churches where people can call in for counseling. The biggest Contact Centre in Kenya is Safaricom Jambo Contact Centre which initially started as an inbound Contact Centre to handle queries of pre-pay and post-pay customers, data and M-pesa users, and issues resolutions dealers and directory services (Safaricom, 2009).

Globalization and competition in the service industry has led to many organizations focusing on how to improve service quality, increase customer base and customer satisfaction and reduce cost and this is what has led to the growth of Contact Centres (McNally, 2007). Most Contact Centres have not been set up with the customer in mind but just as a competitive strategy especially in the banking industry (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2010). In the service industry Contact Centres are mostly set up as a source of differentiation (Foghi, 2007).

2.3 Performance Monitoring

Performance measurement is the process of quantifying the efficiency and effectiveness of an action and Contact Centres produce many measures of performance
through performance monitoring (Neely et al, 2002). One of the main features in the Contact Centre is the control measures taken to ensure efficiency and reduce operational costs through the use of technology (Ball, 2010). Performance monitoring involves observation, examination and recording of employee work related behaviour with or without technological assistance (Stanton, 2000). The purpose of performance monitoring in Contact Centre is to measure efficiency and effectiveness (Reynolds, 2010). It is used as tool of quality control by the management. Performance monitoring due to its prominent and pervasiveness, has attracted attention because of the effects it has on employee stress at Contact Centre, every second that an agent is not on the phone, impacts on the queue time for the customer (Garcia et al., 2012).

Performance monitoring is done through EPM to measure both quantity and quality of calls. It entails performance targets such as number of calls picked, average talk time, average hold time, call wrap up time, calls dropped, number of times the phone rang before being answered, duration of breaks including nature call breaks (Jukes, 2013). Marr & Parry (2004) suggest that when measurement is concentrated on efficiency, people will easily confuse targets and purpose. Targets mean that it’s about the call and not quality of the call. Calls are listened to ensure agents follow the laid down scripts on how to open a call, control the call, the language, response, and knowledge of product and how to close a call. Research shows that emphasis is placed on performance targets rather than on quality of calls (Houlin, 2002; Taylor & Bain, 2000).

A number of studies have revealed that performance monitoring contributes to excessive workload, emotional exhaustion, strain, depression and anxiety and this is the root cause of employee burnout, absenteeism and turnover (Deery et al., 2010, Aksin et
A study conducted in 347 Contact Centres in the United Kingdom by Holman (2002) found out that performance monitoring had a negative relationship with employees wellbeing and employees showed signs of high levels of stress. The purpose of performance monitoring in Contact Centres is to measure efficiency and effectiveness and each call is recorded for quality purposes (Reynolds, 2010). Once an agent picks a call they have to talk to the customer as per the scripts and this includes how the agent opens and closes the call and the tone of the voice (Tichy, 2012). The use of scripts is to standardize conversations and maximize operational efficiency (Burns, 2009).

Technology has led to scripting which dictates how agents talk to customers and has also led to repetitive and highly monitored jobs (Messenger & Goshen, 2010). Use of prescriptive scripts to maximize operational efficiency has a profound disempowering effect on agents (Burns, 2009). An analysis from 58 Australian Contact Centres found out that agents viewed management focus on quantity, performance monitoring and feedback, targets, efficiency demands, workload and support from supervisors as impacting negatively on how they served customers (Dean & Rainnie, 2008). Research findings indicate that Contact Centre models based on low autonomy and high performance monitoring is inappropriate and management is encouraged to move from control to internal motivation (Holman, 2005; Raz & Blank, 2007).

Contact Centres monitor agents electronically but the difference is in the intensity of the monitoring and how feedback is used and communicated (Holman & Wood, 2002). When performance monitoring is conducted in a developmental manner and based on regular feedback with supervisor support, it can have positive feedback and enhance employee satisfaction and engagement (Ball, 2010). Chambal & Castanheria (2010) in
their study noted that though a number of Contact Centres give priority to quantitative criteria of calls with an aim of reducing costs per customer transaction, there are however others whose aim is to improve customer service, encourage employees to be flexible and quality oriented.

2.4 Employee Participation

According to Bhatti & Nawab (2011) employee participation is a combination of task related practices that aim to maximize an employee’s sense of involvement in their work and improve commitment to the organization. Kim (2002) argues that participation is an organizational mechanism supported by the organizational culture that gives employees rights to make decisions and gives them matching responsibilities concerning their work. Employee participation is considered a key element in the success of any organization as it increases commitment and engagement of employees leading to improved organizational performance, but not all organizations have embraced it (Page et al., 2003; Golan, 2005). According Marchington & Wilkinson (2005) employees can participate either directly or indirectly. Direct participation involves face to face individual participation while in indirect participation employees participate through elected employee representatives. In direct participation, employees participate in some or all matters relating to their work and they get to influence their day to day operations (Kester, 2007). Direct participation includes; taking part in decision making, sharing of information that affects employees work, sharing of financially rewards from increased productivity and profits and consultation about changes that will impact on the employee (Nel et al., 2005). In indirect participation, employees get to share in decision making through their elected representatives, this may be through the union representatives and
Participation is through the bargaining agreement (BA) that regulates workplace related issues (Bendix, 2010).

Participation of employees leads to; increased productivity, lower absenteeism and turnover and flexible organizational culture (Golan, 2005). A number of studies on Contact Centres show that most Contact Centres use intensive control instead of employee discretion. This is accomplished through scripting and intensive monitoring (Cook, 2012, Doellgast, 2010). To empower and motivate Contact Centre employees, there ought to be autonomy in making work related decisions. A study carried out in India found out that some Indian companies addressed management of human capital by engaging employees through empowerment (Cappelli et al., 2010). In German some Contact Centres promoted worker discretion while in the United States, Contact Centres adapted tight control and no autonomy so as to contain cost and promote discipline among agents (Doellgast, 2010). Doellgast found that employee participation provided workers with the ability to use their discretion while dealing with customers. Russell (2008) stated that in most Contact Centres, job designs had been deliberately chosen to limit autonomy and technology was used to maximize on the labour process.

Participation improves intrinsic motivation, leads to better decisions as workers have information that management lacks from dealing first hand with customers. Participation enhances productivity through improved skills and knowledge; leads to commitment to decisions made and improves management relations (Gollan, 2005; Brown & Cregan, 2008). In Contact Centres where there is tight control agents never get a chance to develop and use their skills (Doellgast, 2013). Doellgast continues to say that having no control when interacting with customers leads to lower capacity in dealing
with emotional demands and these impacts negatively on the quality of customer service. Participation also leads to increased efficiency and reduced cost of monitoring as employees are committed and involved (Brown & Cregan, 2008). Any organization wishing to improve quality of customer service and increase customer satisfaction should consider giving agents more control over their work and doing away with intensive monitoring.

Participation helps agents cope better with Job demands, problem solving, managing overload, and emotional demands. Research shows that Contact Centre management is gradually moving from the Labour Process models to high commitment models that encourage employee participation to be flexible, committed and distracts them from monotonous and routinized tasks (Chambal & Castanheira, 2010; Fleming & Study, 2010). However majority of Contact Centres still rely on the labour process theory (Holman et al., 2009).

There are however critics to employee involvement and participation. Bockerman (2015) points out that there are two contrasting views of high employee involvement. One view points out that participation is rewarding, meaningful and increases employee’s well-being while the other view that is critical, argues that participation leads to increased workload and only increases autonomy marginally. Bryson & White (2013) argue that employee participation even though associated with higher work commitment and job control; leads to work practices are associated with high levels of intensive work and increased stress. Ramsay et al (2000) however critic employee participation and point out that rather than leading to autonomy and self-management it may lead to increased stress levels due to work intensification.
2.5 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a concept developed by Khan (1990) and states that employees become engaged when they know what is expected of them, have adequate resources and opportunities where they can make an impact and feel fulfilled in their work. Engagement is a positive fulfilling, work related state of mind and is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al, 2004). Highly engaged employees have abundant energy and view their work as pleasing, meaningful and fulfilling; they therefore invest their energies in their work (Crawford et al, 2013). Burnout is the opposite of engagement and is described as a persistent, negative work related state of mind characterized by exhaustion and a sense of reduced professional efficacy, decreased motivation and cynicism at work (Bourdine et al, 2012). Burnout rates among Contact Centre staff are high due to the nature of work that involves high job demands and emotional and mental demands leading to increased levels of absenteeism and turnover (Jain & Sing, 2010; Lee & Shin, 2005).

Contact Centres are faced with the challenge of retention and engagement (Cook, 2012). The Job demands in Contact Centre include; increased work pressure due to call volumes, intensive monitoring and performance targets to ensure efficiency (Deery et al., 2010; Ball & Margulis, 2011). Agents do not have adequate breaks resulting in high levels of mental fatigue and these impacts negatively on employee engagement (Aziz, 2013). Job resources include; decreased autonomy through scripting and lack of social and supervisory support (Deery et al., 2010; Meera Sharma et al., 2011). Supervisory support improves employee engagement if offered to enable staff perform their duties well but in Contact Centres supervisors use bureaucratic control to ensure adherence (Straub, 2011;
A study carried out by the Barnes Group (2008) reveals that the design of work in the Contact Centres, the technology and sitting arrangement inhibits agent’s interaction as each agent sits in a cubicle thereby reducing social support. Though agents are in a room full people the sitting arrangements and continuous calls routed to their extensions do not allow them to interact or seek support from colleagues and this leads to isolation (Barnes Group, 2008). Dealing daily with difficult and angry customers over the phone contributes to emotional demands that affect engagement (Messenger & Goshen, 2010).

Employee stress and well-being at Contact Centres is associated with how the job is designed, performance monitoring systems in place, supportive management and supportive human resource practices (Comcare, 2006). Various studies indicate that there are many factors in the Contact Centre environment that lead to lack of engagement, this include, role conflict of quantity verses quality, high levels of workload, time pressure, repetitive nature of work, lack of task variety, and emotional demands of labour (Sial et al., 2011, Harry & Cortezee, 2011, Choi et al., 2012). Lack of engagement leads to counterproductive behaviour by agents such as manipulating calls through muting calls, pressing transfer button on the phone or pulling off the cord just before the customer hangs up to get time to relax hoping the supervisor is too busy to notice (Wallace et al., 2000; Jensen & Raver, 2012).

Employee engagement is not just about compliance or surface behavior; it is also about emotional attachment and positive feelings to the organization that cause the employee to put in extra effort as they feel valued and have a passion for their work (Cascio, 2010; Price, 2011). Engagement leads to positive employee behavior that leads
to increased performance level and ultimately to organizational success. Therefore, these arguments and views on what brings about employee engagement, aligns well with Carlier & Grau (2012) definitions that, it’s a situation in which employees are fully involved in, and enthusiastic about their work, and thus act in a way that furthers their organizations’ interests. Employee engagement in Contact Centres means agents are passionate and connected to their work and this improves effectiveness leading to exceptional quality service and increased customer satisfaction (Tschida, 2005). Keeping in mind that Contact Centres are set up to increase customer satisfaction and gain a competitive advantage over competitors, there is need to increase employee engagement.

Cook (2012) points out that engagement increases employee commitment to the organization and reduces the intention to quit. Cook continues to point out that the main challenge for facing Contact Centre managers is finding ways to engage staff, increase efficiency and employee satisfaction. Schaufeli (2011) argues that engaged employees are those who have, pleasant, challenging and fulfilling jobs rather than demanding and stressful jobs. Castanheira & Chambel (2010) state that, monotonous and repetitive work in Contact Centre, leads to stress and eventually burnout and these impacts on employee engagement. Contact Centre employees are not engaged due to lack of social support, and autonomy which are vital for engagement to occur (Cook, 2012). A study carried out on Contact Centre agents found that a relatively small increase in autonomy led to a decrease in absenteeism and a significant increase in employee engagement (Bond, 2010).

However, various authors have disagreed with the nature of employee engagement. According to Jeung (2011) employee engagement is just old wine in new bottles. The concept has been criticized as it overlaps with other preexisting notions such
as commitment and job satisfaction and the distinction between engagement and other concepts is blurred (Schaufeli, 2013). Engagement has some elements of job satisfaction, job involvement and organizational commitment (Newman, Joseph & Hulin, 2010). Other researchers argue that hard working employees are not necessarily engaged, they could be workaholics or just working hard to meet a financial need or for promotion (Schaufeli, 2013).

2.6 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a set of ideas used to structure research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The conceptual framework in this study shows the link between the independent variable and the dependent variable. It also shows how the moderating variable changes the strength of the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Moderating variable indicates when a particular effect can be expected, it may increase or decrease the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variable (Hayes, 2009). In this study the independent variable is performance monitoring which is carried out through EPM to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the Contact Centre while the dependent variable is employee engagement. The moderating variable is employee participation. The presumed relationship between the variables under investigation is illustrated in Figure 2.5.

![Conceptual Framework Diagram]
Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, theories on employee engagement and the labour process in Contact Centre are discussed. The theories include the Job Demand Resource Model and the Labour process theory by Braverman (1974). Empirical studies on Contact Centres, performance monitoring and employee engagement are also discussed. The research gap is also identified. The chapter also presents the conceptual framework that shows the relationship between the independent variable which is performance monitoring and the effect of moderating variable which is employee participation and the relationship on the dependent variable which is employee engagement.
CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology of the study. It describes the research design, target population, sample size, data collection and instruments. It also includes data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

This research was a descriptive survey research conducted to find out performance monitoring, employee participation and employee engagement at Kenya Power National Contact Centre. A descriptive survey design is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering questionnaires to sample individuals (Orodho & Kombo, 2009). Descriptive survey entails describing a certain phenomenon. The design was relevant as the researcher sought to determine the performance monitoring measures, employee participation and employee engagement at the Kenya Power Contact Centre. The independent variable was performance monitoring; the moderating variable was employee participation while the dependent variable is employee engagement.

3.2 Target Population

The target population refers to the total elements which the researcher wishes to make some inferences (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). In this study, the target population in Kenya Power Contact Centre was 120 agents. There was no age, gender or terms of contract discrimination.
Table 3.2 Target Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Sampling

The sample design used was a census. A census of the entire population was conducted as the target population was small. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) if the target population is small, selecting a sample would be meaningless and taking the whole population in such cases is advisable.

3.4 Data Collection and Instruments

Data for this study was collected through primary data using structured questionnaires. Kothari (2004), states that the questionnaire is the most appropriate instrument due to its ability to collect large amounts of data in a reasonably quick span of time. The questionnaires had both open ended and closed ended questions. Open ended structured questions were also used so as to include responses that not been obtained using closed ended questions (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The questionnaire was structured in five sections. The first section (A) consisted of the general information data of the respondents. The other four sections, section; B, C, D and E were in line with the objectives of the study which were; employees’ knowledge on use of performance monitoring measures at the Contact Centre, employee participation; employee engagement and the intervention measures to enhance staff engagement.

A pilot study involving ten agents was carried out to pre-test the questionnaire. This was done to ascertain validity of the questionnaire and the reliability of the collected data. A Four-point Likert-type scale with no safe ‘neutral’ option was used to so as to
elicit specific responses from the respondents and avoid indecisiveness. The scale ranged from strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed to strongly agree. According to Lozano et al (2008) the optimum number of Likert scale is between 4 and 7, with fewer than 4 alternatives the reliability and validity decreases.

3.5 Data Analysis

This was a descriptive study and suitable methods of analyzing the data were used. Data collected was organized and checked for errors and uniformity. The data analyzed was divided into two categories that is, qualitative data and quantitative data. Quantitative data was analyzed with help of SPSS statistical software program. Results were presented in frequency tables, pie charts and graphs.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The following ethical considerations were taken; before collecting data permission was sought from PAC University and Kenya Power management. Each questionnaire had an attached cover letter that stating the aim of the research and that confidentiality would be maintained for all responses. Collected data was held confidentially at all times and was only used for research purpose. Respondents were required to voluntary participate in the study without any form of coercion from any side.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the research methodology and design of the study are discussed. Use of descriptive survey research, target population and the reason for choosing census sampling design are also discussed. The chapter also discusses data collection method through structured questionnaires, data analysis and ethical considerations.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is an analysis of the research findings for the data collected. The purpose of the study was to determine performance monitoring, employee participation and employee engagement in Contact Centres; A case study of the Kenya Power Contact Centre. Upon collection of the data, the filled questionnaires were verified for completeness and coded, then analyzed using SPSS. The results from the data were presented using tables, graphs and pie charts. The results were organized in various categories based on the objectives of the study which were; performance monitoring, employee participation, employee engagement and intervention measures.

4.2 Response Rate

The study was carried out in July 2016 at Kenya Power Contact Centre in Nairobi. Before the questionnaires were distributed, a pre-test was conducted with ten agents participating who were part of the census. This was done so as to test validity of the questions and reliability of the data collected. The researcher made changes on the questionnaires based on the results of the pre-testing exercise, after which the major collection of data was undertaken. The period from the first day of distribution to the final day of filling the questionnaires was about three weeks. This was understandable because of the nature of work at the Contact Centre as agents could only fill the questionnaires during their free time mostly before a shift. A total of 120 questionnaires were administered and 107 were completed and returned, this translated to 89.16%
response rate. Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) point out that the statistically significant response rate for analysis should be at least 50%.

4.3 General Information

This section discusses the results of the respondent’s general information including gender of respondent, age of the respondent, level of education and how long the respondent has worked at the Contact Centre.

4.3.1 Gender Distribution of the Respondents

The research sought to establish the gender distribution of the respondents. The findings are presented in table 4.1. The study findings indicate that of the 107 respondents’ majority were females at 75.7% while 24.3% of the respondents were male. This shows that the Contact Centre has more female employees than male employee.

Table 4.1 Gender Distribution of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author (2016)

4.3.2 Age of the Respondent

The study also sought to establish the age distribution of the respondents. The respondents were asked to indicate their age using a scale of 20-25 years, 26-30 years, 31-35 years, 36-40 years and above 41 years. The findings are presented in Table 4.2. The study established that 34.6% of the respondents were 26-30 years, 32.7% were 31-35
years, and 17.5% were 36-40 years, while 7.5% were 20-25 years and another 7.5% were over 41 years of age. From the study majority of the agents were between 26-30 years and that there were very few agents over the age of 41 years.

Table 4.2 Age Distribution of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-25 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30 years</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35 years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40 years</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 years &amp;&gt;</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author (2016)

4.3.3 Educational Level of Respondents

The respondents were asked to indicate their educational level and the findings are presented in table 4.3. The findings indicated that majority of the respondents were university graduates who comprised of 50.5%. Diploma holders were 36.4%; post graduate 8.4% and respondents who had others levels of education comprised of 2.8% while 1.9% of the respondents did not specify their educational level. This indicated that majority of the respondents were graduates.

Table 4.3 Educational Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.4 Years in Employment at the Contact Centre

The study sought to find out how long respondents had worked at the Contact centre and the results are presented in table 4.4. The study found out that majority of the respondents, 36% had only worked at the Contact Centre for 3-5 years, while 24.3% had worked for 0-2 years, 15.9 % for 8-10 years, 13.1% for over 11 years and 10.3% for 5-7 years.

Table 4.4 Years in Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Employment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2 years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years &gt;</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author (2016)

4.4 Section B: Performance Monitoring Measures

This section sought to find the performance monitoring measures used at the Kenya power Contact Centre. The respondents were presented with nine questions which
they were required to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the questions. A Four-point Likert scale with no safe ‘neutral’ option was used to elicit specific responses from the respondents. All 107 respondents’ attempted and completed the nine questions that required them either to, strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly disagree. The findings are presented in Table 4.5 and Figure 4.1.

Table 4.5 Performance Monitoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  All calls are recorded and listened to for quality purpose</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  All my activities in the system are electronically monitored to check on conformity and adherence</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  All calls have to be answered in a prescribed way for uniformity and reduced handle time.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Performance is based on both the quantity and quality of calls</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Call targets hinder me from giving quality service to customers</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  I find call monitoring too intensive and unnerving</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  The length of breaks give ample time for relaxing and unwinding</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Monitoring is used to train and develop rather than discipline</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Technology determines the rate of work as the system continually routes calls to my extension as long as am the ready status</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author (2016)

The study observed that the respondents had divergent views concerning performance monitoring at the Contact Centre. The first question was on whether all calls are recorded and listened to for quality purpose. Majority of the respondents 49.5%
strongly agreed, 36.5% agreed while 8.4% disagreed with the question while only 5.6% strongly disagreed that all calls are listened to and recorded for quality purposes.

The second question sought to know if all activities in the system were electronically monitored to check on conformity and adherence. This was confirmed to be true as majority of the respondents were in agreement with this question. Some 44.9% respondents agreed, while 40.2% strongly agreed. Only 11.2 % disagreed with the question while 3.7% strongly disagreed that all their activities were monitored in the system.

The third question was on whether all calls were answered in a prescribed way for uniformity to reduce handle time. Majority of the respondents 51.8 % agreed with the question while 33.6% strongly agreed. Only 10.9% disagreed while 3.7% strongly disagreed that calls have to be answered in a prescribed way.

The fourth question sought to find out if performance was based on both quantity of calls picked and quality of calls. The questions had a positive rating with54.8 % of the respondents agreeing with the question and 31.8 % strongly agreed that performance is based on both quantity and quality. Only 9.9% disagreed while 3.5% strongly disagreed with the question.

The fifth question was on whether targets hindered agents from giving quality service to customers, 40.2 % agreed that this was true while 35.6% strongly agreed. Only 12.1% disagreed while another 12.1% strongly disagreed and felt that targets did not hinder them from giving quality service to customers.
The sixth question sought to find out if monitoring was too intensive and unnerving. 35.6% agreed while 19.6% strongly agreed that monitoring at the Contact Centre was intensive and unnerving. 27.1% disagreed with the question and another 17.7% strongly disagreed that monitoring was too intensive and unnerving.

The seventh question sought to find out if the length of the breaks gave ample time for relaxing and unwinding. This question did not get a positive response as majority stated that they did not feel relaxed even after the breaks. 37.7% respondents disagreed while 30.8% strongly disagreed. Only 16.5% agreed while 15% strongly agreed that breaks gave them ample time to relax and unwind.

The eighth question sought to find out if the aim of monitoring was to develop the agents or to discipline them. Majority, 36.4% respondents, agreed that the aim of monitoring was to train and develop them rather than discipline. 18.7% strongly agreed with the question while 30% disagreed and 14.9% strongly disagreed and thought that monitoring was used to discipline them and not to develop them.

In the last and ninth question which sought to find out if technology determined the rate of work as system continually routes calls to agent’s extensions, more than half indicated that this was indeed true. Only 9.3% disagreed while 1.9% strongly disagreed with the statement. On the other hand majority 53.3% agreed while 35.5% strongly agreed that technology does determine the rate at which calls are routed to their extensions.
4.5 Section C: Employee Participation

The objective of this section was to find out if agents were consulted or involved in any decision making concerning their work. The respondents were presented with seven questions which they were required to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the questions. A four-point Likert scale with no safe ‘neutral’ option was used to elicit specific responses from the respondents. All 107 respondents’ attempted and completed the seven questions that required them either to, strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly disagree. The findings are shown in Table 4.6 and Figure 4.2.
Table 4.6 Employee Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Supervisors determine how work is conducted</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Agents are involved in decision making concerning changes at the</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Answering calls the same way is monotonous and I wish my work had</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>variety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The job provides me with a chance to use my initiative</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 We have regular meetings where all agents give ideas on how to</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improve our services to customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 The job has allowed me to grow and improve my skills</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Union representatives meet with management to represent our issues</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concerning work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first question sought to find out if the supervisors determine how work is conducted at the Contact Centre. More than half of the respondents acknowledged that this was true, 62.6% agreed while 23.4% strongly agreed that supervisors determined how work was conducted. Only 13.1% disagreed that supervisors determined how work was conducted while 0.9% strongly disagreed.

In question two respondents were asked if they were involved in any decision making concerning changes in the Contact Centre. 43.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this question while 52.3% disagreed. Only 4.6% agreed with the
statement and this could be the agents who act as team leaders and act as supervisor when the shift supervisor is absent.

Question three sought to find out if answering calls the same way all day was repetitive and monotonous and if the respondents wished they had variety in their work. Majority agreed that it was indeed monotonous with 57.9% strongly agreeing and 29% strongly agreeing. On the other hand 11.2% disagreed with this statement and only 1.9% strongly disagreed. They did not mind picking calls the whole day.

In question four, respondents were asked if the job provided a chance to use personal initiative in carrying out their work, the scores indicated that majority at 45.6% disagreed while 25.7% strongly disagree. On the other hand, 16.6% agreed that they were allowed to use their initiative or judgment while carrying out their work and 12.1 % strongly agreed.

In question five respondents were asked if they had regular meetings where they gave ideas on how to improve quality of service to the customers. Majority of the respondents agreed that they had forums where they gave ideas on how to improve their work. 45.8% agreed that they gave out ideas on how to improve while 16.8% strongly agreed with this question. Only 27.1 disagreed with the statement while 10.3 strongly disagreed. If agents gave their opinions and ideas during meetings then why did they feel that they were not involved as per the findings in the other questions? It could be that even after giving opinions during meetings the opinions are ignored and they then develop cynicism and feel betrayed. The scores could also indicate a form of involvement but not high involvement or very low job autonomy.
Question six sought to find out if the working in the Contact Centre had allowed agents to grow and improve their skills. 38.3 % agreed that this was true while 23.2% strongly agreed. On the other hand a few respondents disagreed with the question and implied that they had not developed and improved their skills and knowledge, 24.3% disagreed while 14.2% strongly disagreed.

The last question sought to find out from respondents whether union representatives met with management to represent their work issues. Majority responded positively that they voiced their opinions and ideas through union officials. 43% agreed that they made suggestion on how to improve their work through union representatives while 22.4 % strongly agreed. At the same time 15% strongly disagreed while 19.6% agreed. This implied that there was indirect participation where agents have a voice through elected union shop stewards.
4.5.1 Different Ways in which Agents Participate

This was an open ended question that sought to know the different ways respondents were involved in improving their work and quality of customer service. The respondents mentioned other ways in which they were involved and these included; Training and shift meetings. However, only 65 out of the 107 attempted to answer this question. The respondents stated that when there were new products they got training on new products but this usually came after the product had already been launched and rolled out to the customers. They had to request for the training on the product after customers started calling in and they had no way of assisting the customers. They felt that though these trainings were good they were just an afterthought. The respondents also
stated that new agents underwent a series of trainings on customer service, company products and also site visits to power substations so as to learn and be able to assist customers. Quality analysts also took time to mentor and coach the new agents over a period of time.

The Contact Centre depends on other departments to have customer’s complaints resolved and the respondents indicated that during meetings they discussed and gave ways in which other departments could assist in having complaints resolved within the minimum time. Each shift chose shift representatives who held meetings with team leaders from other departments on ways of working together and giving updates and feedback to Contact Centre on pending issues. They however pointed out that this was not the case as when it came to their individual work at the Contact Centre most of their ideas given during meetings were watered down or ignored by management.
To identify employee engagement at the Contact Centre, the respondents were presented with various questions which they were required to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the questions. A four-point Likert scale with no safe ‘neutral’ option was used to elicit specific responses from the respondents. All 107 respondents’ attempted and completed the seven questions that required them either to, strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly disagree. The findings are shown in Table 4.7 and Figure 4.3.

Table 4.7 Employee Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I look forward to going to work each morning</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a very supportive supervisor</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to persevere and keep my emotions in check even when customers are angry and abusive</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am fulfilled and bursting with energy while working</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable with additional duties when called upon by the supervisor.</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I adhere to the rules and achieve set targets with enthusiasm</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agents have left Contact Centre due to nature of work</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first question sought to find out from the respondents if they looked forward to going to work each morning, 32.7% strongly disagreed as they did not look forward to reporting each morning at the Contact Centre while 28.7% disagreed. However 30% agreed that they looked forward to going to work while only 8.4 % indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement.

The second question sought to find out if the respondents had supportive supervisors. Here the opinions were divided as respondents work in different shifts and therefore have different supervisors. 36.4% disagreed with the question while 33.6% strongly disagreed. On the other hand 20.6% agreed that they had supportive supervisors who inspired them while 9.4% strongly agreed.

The third question sought to find out if the respondents were able to persevere and keep emotions in check even when customers got angry and abusive. This question got a favorable response from majority of respondents. 59.7% agreed while 21.6% strongly agreed that they were able to keep their emotions in check when dealing with abusive customers. However 15.9% disagreed while 2.8% strongly disagreed with the statement.

The fourth question sought to find out if the respondents’ were fulfilled and bursting with energy while carrying out their duties which is one of the signs of employee engagement. Majority indicated that they were not at all fulfilled and bursting with energy while carrying out their duties. 37% disagreed while 35% strongly disagreed.
the other hand 14.8% agreed and 13.2% strongly agreed that they were fulfilled and bursting with energy while working at the Contact Centre.

In the fifth question the respondents’ were asked if they comfortable with any other additional duties when called upon by the supervisor. More than half responded favorably to this question. 62.7% agreed while 16.8% strongly agreed that they did not mind any other additional duties. However 11.2% strongly disagreed while 9.3% indicated that they were not comfortable with other duties.

The sixth question sought to find out if the respondents followed the set rules and achieved set targets with enthusiasm. Majority of the respondents agreed that even though they adhered and achieved targets they lacked enthusiasm in their work. 39.3% agreed to this while 37.3% strongly agreed. However 13.1% strongly disagreed while 10.3% disagreed with the statement meaning they had a lot of enthusiasm while going about their duties.

When asked if other agents had left the Contact centre due to the stressful nature of work, 64.5% agreed while 21.5% strongly agreed that indeed agents had left Contact Centre due to the stressful working environment. Few respondents however disputed this, 7.5% disagreed while 6.5% strongly disagreed that agents had left Contact Centre due to the stressful environment.

The last question sought to find out if the respondents had thought of quitting their work at the Contact Centre. The scores indicate that over half of the respondents had thought of leaving the Contact Centre due to the nature of work. 35.5% agreed while 28% strongly agreed with the statement. However there were respondents who had never
thought of quitting due to the nature of work and these comprised of 21.5% who agreed while another 11.2% strongly disagreed.

![Employee Engagement](image)

Figure 4.4 Employee Engagement

4.6.1 Factors leading to Demotivation and Lack of Engagement

Respondents were asked to explain in their own words aspects of their jobs at the Contact Centre that led to demotivation and lack of engagement. They mentioned several factors presented in Table 4.8 and Figure 4.5. All 107 respondents attempted and completed this section.
Table 4.8 Factors leading to Demotivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Low pay</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Monotony of work</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Short breaks and unrealistic targets</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strict supervision and lack of recognition</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lack of career progression</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Imposed decisions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Backaches due to sitting for long on bad seats</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Abusive words from customers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>107</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pie chart showing the distribution of factors leading to demotivation:**
- Low pay: 23.4%
- Monotony of work: 15.9%
- Short breaks and unrealistic targets: 14.9%
- Strict supervision and lack of recognition: 13.1%
- Lack of career progression: 13.1%
- Imposed decisions: 10.3%
- Backaches due to sitting for long on bad seats: 4.7%
- Abusive words from customers: 4.6%
4.7 Section E: Intervention Measures

This section attempted to know from the respondents how performance monitoring could be applied positively and the possible intervention measures that would increase employee engagement at the Contact Centre. The following below represent the various views given by the respondents.

4.7.1 Applying Performance Monitoring Positively

According to the respondents, performance monitoring can be applied positively to develop agents when all agents in the Contact Centre are treated fairly with no discrimination from the supervisors. Respondents felt that the few agents handling social media were given special treatment and they could rotate between calls, mail and social media while others did not have the privilege of job rotation. They indicated that there should be job enrichment through job rotation so as to avoid monotony of calls. Respondents also indicated that management should avoid dwelling too much on shorting comings of an agents noted during monitoring but instead strive to enable them overcome the shortcomings. Respondents indicated that they should be complimented and recognized for difficult calls well-handled. They noted that the length of the breaks was too short and there was need to increase the number of breaks or increase break duration to allow one to unwind and relax after dealing with angry and abusive customers. Management should ensure that the targets set are realistic and achievable and seekagent’s opinions before setting targets.
Due to very high unrealistic targets and pressure a number of agents had resorted to absenteeism through faking sick offs and emergency leaves. Others resorted to manipulating the system by disconnecting calls, routing back calls to the queue, transferring calls to other departments or hanging up on customers without giving them quality service so as to achieve the targets set for them. Kenya Power Contact Centre is different from other Contact Centres where customers get resolutions to their complaints within the first call. In Kenya Power, the Contact Centre depends on other departments to resolve customer complaints especially on outages, delayed connection of new supply and faulty meters and transformers. Therefore most complaints are not resolved within the first call leading to repeat calls; respondents felt that it was therefore not in order to set targets based on other inbound Contact Centres that offer different services like Safaricom, Kencall or Kenya Airways.

Respondents indicated that supervisors should give performance feedback face to face instead of the usual mails sent to the whole team, showing how each team member had performed and demanding an explanation from an agent who did not log in on time, had dropped calls, long breaks or had not achieved targets. The respondents had no time to read or respond to mails due to the nature of work and each person should be dealt with individually. According to the respondents, supervisors ought to be more supportive and flexible instead of only caring about targets, dropped calls and break durations. Equally there is need to motivate the best performing agent through recognition and reward and performance based pay.
4.7.2 Other Intervention Measures

Respondents indicated that; agents who had been in the Contact Centre for long had not been promoted and had stagnated in one job grade, some for over 15 years. They all performed the same jobs but they had different titles, different salaries while some had been on renewable contracts for over ten years leading demotivation and agents seeking transfers to other departments. Most of the respondents who were graduates were on 3 months or 3 years contracts which were always renewed with no improvement of terms; hence they were always looking for permanent jobs elsewhere. They felt that if management offered them job security through permanent positions this would improve agents commitment and engagement. They also mentioned that sitting for long hours, long night shift of eleven hours and continuous calls eventually leads to health issues such as backaches, headaches and auditory problems, therefore they should receive increased medical allowances as they were always in hospital due to work related health issues. Respondents advised that management should invest in ergonometric seats that supported the back, better work stations, upgraded systems and better quality headsets so as to make working in Contact Centre easier.

The respondents indicated that staff welfare should be looked into and they should be accorded time off to handle urgent family issues instead of being denied day offs and leaves due to under capacity in the Contact Centre. Respondents noted that the shift capacity was fifty agents per shift but each shift had less thirty agents per sitting and at time even less. The customer base had increased to over 4 million and this led to increased call volumes yet the number of agents had remained the same. They therefore could not handle incoming call traffic leading to high numbers of dropped calls which
they were blamed for. This means the Contact Centre is under capacity which is stressful for those working in the contact centre. They felt that human resource needed to address the issue urgently. Respondents also pointed out that involving them in decisions that affect their work would greatly reduce stress and increase agent’s commitment to their work and to the company. Agents gave ideas during shift meeting but most were watered down and not taken seriously by the supervisors. Management should improve the way they treat agents given that they are the link between the company and the customers, they should be viewed and treated with respect but not as miserable people without options in life.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter the results and findings based on specific objectives have been presented in form of tables, bar charts and pie charts. Qualitative data has also been presented. The study was on effect of performance monitoring and employee participation on employee engagement at the Kenya Power Contact Centre. Of interest were the respondents’ general information which included; gender, age, level of education and the years the respondent had worked in the Contact Centre. The study had a response rate of 89.16% with the majority of the respondents being female at 75.7%. Majority of the respondents were between 26-30 years of age (34.6%). Most of the respondents were graduates (50.5%). The highest number of respondents had worked between 3-5 years (36.5%).

Respondents indicated that the work environment was stressful especially for the new agents as calls were listened to for quality purposes, with all activities being electronically monitored. They also indicated that their work was monotonous with a lot
of pressure from unrealistic targets set without consultation, abusive customers and unsupportive supervisors. Respondents pointed out that their participation was very moderate. They did not participate in any decisions involving their work as supervisors determined how work was carried out. They were also not involved during major changes and gave examples of Rota changes, grouping of skills set and setting of targets. Union representatives came in when the agent’s asked them to intervene on their behalf after changes were made without them being consulted and they felt these changes were oppressive. The respondents also indicated that committed and engagement was very low and that they were always thinking of quitting work. They recommended for more support from supervisors, setting of realistic target, better terms of service and remuneration, longer breaks and more involvement.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of performance monitoring measures and employee participation on employee engagement at the Kenya Power Contact Centre. This chapter shows the summary of the data findings of the study, conclusion and recommendations. It also highlights the limitations of the study and proposed areas for future research.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The first objective of this study was to determine the performance monitoring measures used in Kenya Power Contact Centre to ensure adherence and efficiency. The dependent variable was performance monitoring while the independent variable was employee engagement, employee participation was the moderating variable.

The study revealed majority of the agents agreed that electronic performance monitoring is used to monitor activities and also to record calls to gauge for quality of the call. The study also revealed that technology determines the rate of work, measures the number of calls picked, calls not answered, length of calls and length of breaks. The system then generates reports from the data for performance feedback to the agents. The study also found out that calls have to be answered in a prescribed way for standardization and to reduce the handle time per call to allow agents to pick as many calls as possible, revealing that the major focus is on quantity of calls and hence the set
call targets. Majority of the agents agreed that trying to achieve the set call targets greatly compromised on the quality of the calls. The study is in line with Russell (2008) findings that in most Contact Centres, job designs had been deliberately chosen to limit autonomy and technology was used to maximize on the labour process.

The second objective was to establish if agents participated in decisions concerning their work. 86% of the respondents agreed that supervisors determined how work was done without any input from the agents. Majority also were in agreement that agents were not involved in decisions during major changes in the contact centre. However, 62.6% did agree that they had regular shift meetings where they gave ideas on how customers can be served better in collaboration with other departments. However this only applied where other departments were concerned, when it came to ideas on their individual work the supervisors ignored their ideas and still made all major decisions. Another finding of the study was that agents never had a chance to use their initiative as the work was monotonous, scripted, having no variety and where all the decisions regarding work was up to the supervisors. However majority of the agents agreed that the job had allowed them to grow and improve their skill in dealing with customers through continuous trainings on customer service and products. The findings of the study indicated that there was indirect participation through union representatives but this was only after agents requested the union representatives to handle issues that they felt were oppressive to them such as change of Rota to increase working hours, setting of skills sets and enforcement of unrealistic targets.

The third objective was to determine employee engagement at the Contact Centre. The findings of this study was that majority of the agents were not engaged in their work.
Majority did not look forward to going to work each morning, 60% of the agents felt that supervisors were not supportive at all. 72% also indicated that they were not fulfilled with their work, while 76.6% adhered and achieved targets set for them but out of duty and knowing that they were being monitored but with no enthusiasm. The study also found out that agents had left contact centre due to the nature of work and majority were always thinking of quitting showing lack of commitment and loyalty and demotivation. The study findings indicated that leading factors that lead to demotivation and lack of engagement were; low pay at 23.4%, monotony of work at 15.9%, short breaks and unrealistic targets at 14.9%, strict supervision and lack of recognition at 13.1% and lack of career progression at 13.1%. Other factors included imposed decisions at 10.3%, backaches due to long sitting hours at 4.7% and abusive customers at 4.6%.

The fourth objective was to establish interventions that enhance staff engagement at Kenya Power Contact Centre. The respondents gave the following intervention measures: Respondents agreed that performance monitoring and targets were necessary but indicated that performance monitoring should be applied positively and without discrimination from supervisors and quality analyst. Respondents also noted that management should avoid dwelling too much on shorting comings of an agent noted during monitoring but instead strive to enable them overcome the shortcomings. Respondents indicated that they should be complimented for difficult calls well-handled and not only called by the quality analyst when a call was not properly handled or when reported by a customer.

Management also ought to ensure that the targets set were realistic and achievable and include agent’s opinions before setting targets. Management should also stop
comparing Kenya Power Contact Centre with other inbound Contact Centers such as Safaricom, Kencall or Kenya Airways as the services offered could not be compared. It was therefore unrealistic to set targets based on this other Contact Centres. Respondents indicated that supervisors should give performance feedback face to face instead of the usual mails sent to the whole team, showing how each team member had performed and demanding an explanation from an agent who did not log in on time, had dropped calls, long breaks or had not achieved targets. The respondents had no time to read or respond to mails due to the nature of work and each person should be dealt with individually. Equally there is need to motivate the best performing agent through recognition and reward. The findings also indicated that respondents wanted to be empowered by being allowed to contribute ideas on their day to day work and be involved directly in decision making concerning their work and any major changes in the Contact Centre.

Other intervention measures recommended by agents were: Management should develop a system of rewarding agents, who perform their work diligently, achieve targets and who keep on getting compliments from customers so as to motivate them. They also noted that agents who had been in the Contact Centre for long had not been promoted and had stagnated in one job grade some for over 15 years. They all performed the same jobs but they had different titles, different salaries while some had been on renewable contracts for over ten years leading some to look for work elsewhere. They recommended performance based salaries or bonus according to performance. They also recommended that agents be employed on permanent basis instead of the renewable 3 months and 3 years contract.
They also mentioned that sitting for long hours, long night shift of eleven hours and continuous calls eventually led to health issues such as backaches, headaches and auditory problems and therefore they should receive increased medical allowances as they were always in hospital due to backaches and ear problems and other stress related issues. Respondents advised that management should invest in ergonomic seats that support the back, quality headsets and upgrade systems. They noted that the length of the breaks was too short and needed longer breaks to unwind. The respondents indicated that staff welfare should be looked into and they should be accorded time off to handle urgent family issues instead of being denied leaves due to under capacity problem in the Contact Centre. There was need to employ more staff at the Contact Centre to handle the increasing customer base. These they felt would greatly reduce stress and turnover.

5.3 Conclusion

The study established that at the Kenya Power Contact Centre, intensive performance monitoring measures, lack of participation through direct participation and performance related pay have led to a negative impact on employee engagement. The findings of this study seem to back up various researches on performance monitoring that stated that when management’s priority is on control and quantity of calls in order to maximize volumes, the focus is on short standardized interactions with customers through simplified work processes, low autonomy and tight control practices (Doellgast, 2010; Ball, 2010). When employees are not engaged they provide poor customer service and do not go the extra mile as engaged employees would. Kenya Power Contact Centre still relies on the labour process theory (Braverman, 1974) based on the assembly line
approach instead of the empowerment process or high involvement process that seeks to empower employees through participation and performance related pay.

5.3.1 Performance Monitoring

Like many other Contact Centres Kenya Power has invested heavily in technology and uses electronic performance monitoring to ensure adherence and efficiency but not to reduce cost as this is an inbound Contact Centre and so the cost is on customers side. Performance by agents is based on both quantity and also by the quality of calls. This is one of the leading factors of stress at the Contact Centre as it’s difficult to achieve a balance between the two if targets set are too high. The increased workload due to unrealistic targets leads to work pressure that contributes to stress, demotivation and lack of employee engagement. Various studies on Contact Centres point out that the jobs are equated to factory jobs or assembly lines based on the labour process by Braverman (1974) which advocated for one best way of carrying out a task, deskilling, detailed measurement of performance and output and control by management to ensure efficiency (Choi et al., 2012; free, 2015)

The respondents pointed out that the work is standardized, repetitive, with low autonomy due to scripting, imposed decisions and monotony as all agents do is answer calls in a prescribed way therefore not being able to use their skills initiative. This is what Taylor & Bain (2007) referred to as deskilling whereby all power rests on management and the workers tasks is only to carry out instructions.
5.3.2 Employee Participation

Regarding Participation, the study findings indicate that the agents have little control over their work as it’s the supervisors who determine how work is conducted and the changes that take place in Contact Centre. The study found out there was indirect participation through union representatives but this was as a last minute resort when agents felt oppressed by new changes and union officials had to intervene. Lack of empowerment causes demotivation and low engagement and agents feel pushed to perform. According to (Doellgast, 2013) where there is tight control agents never get a chance to develop and use their skills. Doellgast continues to say that having no control when interacting with customers leads to lower capacity in dealing with emotional demands and these impacts negatively on the quality of customer service. And this is the case in Kenya Power Contact Centre.

The findings of this study are in line with findings on employee engagement by Crawford et al (2013) who listed the drivers of employee engagement as autonomy, variety and reward and recognition.

5.3.3 Employee Engagement

The study established that majority of the agents have no passion, energy or enthusiasm for their work and were seeking transfers to other departments, submitting fake sick offs and taking emergency leaves, manipulating the system and even quitting work at the Contact Centre due to the nature of work which was stressful. This can all be attributed to low pay, stagnation, lack of support, low autonomy, imposed decisions and intensive performance monitoring. Hakanen et al (2006) established in their research on employee engagement that supervisory support, involvement in decision making and
participation in day to day control over tasks are positively related to employee engagement.

Based on the JD-R model, the job demands in Kenya Power Contact Centre that lead to stress and eventually burnout include; work overload and work pressure due to unrealistic targets, high emotional demands, aggressive customers, and lack of task variety. This is supported by the findings of Bakker et al (2003) on their study on burnout in Contact centres. On the other hand the job resources in the Contact Centre that lead to demotivation, lack of commitment and loyalty as pointed out by the respondents include, low pay, lack of career growth, lack of supervisory support, lack of autonomy. Lack of participation and imposed decisions also has an effect on employee engagement as agents don’t buy in and own the changes implements.

5.4 Recommendations

Any organization wishing to improve quality of customer service and increase customer satisfaction should consider giving agents more control over their work and doing away with intensive monitoring. Performance monitoring is necessary to ensure adherence and efficiency but how it is conducted and how feedback is given seems to be the problem. Management should stop pushing for unrealistic targets that interfere with quality but should instead try to strike a balance between the manageable targets that will not hinder quality of calls. Calls should not be answered in a prescribed way as all calls are different requiring different feedback by agents. Emphasis should be on how the call is opened and closed, empathy and professionalism but not on the duration of calls. The feedback from the monitoring should be given constructively with management concentrating on the agent’s strengths and not their weaknesses.
The length of breaks should be considered but this can only happen if under capacity issue is dealt with by employing more agents and investing in latest technology which allows for self service by customers. The company should also modernize its power network structure to avoid frequent outages and work on installing better meters and transformers thus reducing calls to the Contact Centre as this is what leads to high call volumes. Another recommendation is that the agents performance should be rewarded through performance related pay tied to one’s performance. Kgomo & Swarts (2010) point out that one of the ways in which management can gain commitment and loyalty is by considering how the Contact Centre agents feel regarding their compensation and benefits. They continue to say that staffing structures in Contact centres should be considered carefully Kenya Power human resource department should come up with a clear structure on career growth to avoid stagnation.

On employee participation, agents deal with customers on daily basis and they therefore have a better understanding of the customer’s issues and should be in decision making. Participative management should be introduced instead of the authoritarian leadership style currently applied by management. Bakker & Demerouti (2007) state that autonomy is important for an employee’s well-being and commitment as greater autonomy helps employees deal with stress associated with their work. Job variety should also be considered and any agent willing and able to serve customers through social media should be allowed to do so through job rotation between calls, chat, Facebook, tweeter and emails for variety and reduction of monotony.

The company should introduce a maximum number of years that an agent can work in a Contact Centre as the work is both emotionally and physically draining leading
to health issues and burnout. Management should consider transfers to other departments based on the agent’s qualifications after serving the maximum number of years in the Contact Centre. Management should work on improving the working environment by buying ergonometric seats, quality headsets, creating a room where agents can sit comfortable and relax with relaxing music and coaches. Investing in computers that are faster and upgrading systems. Buying better quality headsets and improving on the workstations.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Performance monitoring and employee engagement is a sensitive topic and most agents were not willing to be part of the study for fear of victimization. It was only after assurance that it had nothing to with management that most agents agreed to fill the questionnaire. The agents rarely have free time so filling the questionnaire took longer than anticipated. Respondents also felt that the questions were too many and some may have filled the questionnaires just for the sake of completing the form.

5.6 Areas for Further Studies

The study focused on effects of performance monitoring and employee participation on employee engagement in an inbound utility company thus the study was specific to an inbound Contact Centre in Kenya. The study thus laid a foundation for further studies in both inbound and outbound Contact Centres and also outsourced Contact Centres in different sectors. This will provide comprehensive empirical results and findings on effects of performance monitoring and employee participation on employee engagement.
REFERENCES


Consiglio, C., Börgomi, L., Alessandri, G., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2013). Does self-efficacy matter for burnout and sickness absenteeism? The mediating role of demands and resources at the individual and team levels. Work & Stress, 27(1), 22-42.


Wanja, G.N. (2014). *Strategic Responses to Absenteeism by Mobile Telephony Call Centres within Nairobi*: Unpublished MBA project


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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a postgraduate student pursuing a Masters in Leadership at the Pan African Christian University. I am currently conducting a research on the topic: Performance monitoring, Employee Participation and Employee Engagement in Contact Centres: A case study of Kenya Power

The purpose of this letter is to request you to respond to the attached questionnaire. The information provided will be treated in strict confidence and will be used for academic purposes only.

Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation.

Virginia W. Kariuki
APPENDIX II: AGENT QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A

General Information

Please tick as appropriate

1. Gender of respondent:  Male ☐ Female ☐


3. Level of education:  Diploma level ☐ Degree ☐ Masters ☐ other ☐

4. How many years have you worked in your current position?

0-2 ☐ 3-5 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 1 years and more ☐
SECTION B: PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The following statements are on performance monitoring. Please read each statement carefully and tick the most appropriate answer.

Key:  Strongly Disagree (SD) -1; Disagree (D) -2; Agree (A) -3; Strongly Agree (SA) -4

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<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All calls are recorded and listened to for quality purpose</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>All my activities in the system are electronically monitored to check on conformity and adherence</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>All calls have to be answered in a prescribed way for uniformity and reduced handle time.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Performance is based on both the quantity and quality of calls</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Call targets hinder me from giving quality service to customers</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>I find call monitoring too intensive and unnerving</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>The length of breaks give ample time for relaxing and unwinding</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Monitoring is used to train and develop rather than discipline</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Technology determines the rate of work as the system continually routes calls to my extension as long as am the ready status</td>
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SECTION C: EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION
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<tr>
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<th>Supervisors determine how work is conducted</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agents are involved in decision making concerning changes at the Contact Center</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Answering calls in the same way the whole day is repetitive and monotonous and I wish my work had variety</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The job provides me with a chance to use my initiative</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>We have regular meetings where all agents give ideas on how to improve our services to customers</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The work has allowed me to grow and improve my skills and knowledge</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Union representatives meet with management to present our issues concerning work</td>
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<td>7</td>
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8. What are the different ways in which agents are involved in improving their work and quality of customer service at the Contact Centre?  

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**SECTION D: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**
The following statements are on employee engagement (commitment and loyalty). Please read each statement carefully and rate the extent to which you agree with the statement.

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I look forward to going to work each morning</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>I have a very supportive supervisor</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>I am able to persevere and keep my emotions in check even when customers are angry and abusive</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>I feel so fulfilled and bursting with energy while carrying out my work at the Contact Center</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I am comfortable with additional duties when called upon by the supervisor.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>I adhere to the rules and achieve targets with enthusiasm</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Agents have left the Contact Centre due to the stressful nature of work</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>I am always thinking of quitting my work as a Contact Centre agent</td>
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9. What are some of the aspects of your job that lead to demotivation and lack of engagement?

SECTION E: INTERVENTION MEASURES
1. Performance monitoring is necessary to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the Contact Centre. In what way do you feel that it should be applied positively to develop agents and increase engagement?

2. What are some of the measures that can be taken by management to reduce stress and turnover in the Contact Centre and improve employee engagement?

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