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To Analyze the Effect of Employee Engagement and Enablement on Change Management Practices in Family-Owned Supermarkets in Kenya. A Case Study of Quickmart Supermarket

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement and enablement have become increasingly important topics in the field of organizational management. The purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of employee engagement and enablement on change management practices in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya, using Quickmart Supermarket as a case study. The research will explore the extent to which employee engagement and enablement contribute to the success of change management initiatives in Quickmart Supermarket, and the factors that facilitate or hinder this process. This study was anchored on a theoretical framework involving Kotter's 8 step change management model. The descriptive cross-sectional design was used.   The target population for this study comprised of 240 management employees drawn from management levels 1 to 4. A focused study was done for regional managers, and face-to-face interviews were conducted for senior managers, in addition, questionnaires were used to collect data from the 150 sampled employees. Validity tests were used to reduce threat to content validity while reliability tests were used to test consistent, and to ensure the results were free from bias. All the statistical analysis was done using SPSS. The study findings revealed that employee engagement in decision making, change reward management and new skills training to meet the demands of new changes were vital for success in new change adoption. The results will be useful for managers of family-owned supermarkets who seek to improve the effectiveness of change management initiatives. By analyzing the case of Quickmart Supermarket, the study will provide practical insights into how employee engagement and enablement can be leveraged to improve change management practices in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya.

Keywords: Change Adoption, Resistance to Change

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing business environment, change management has become a critical function for organizations seeking to remain competitive. However, the challenges of managing change are particularly pronounced in family-owned businesses, where ownership structures and family dynamics can complicate the process of organizational transformation. Despite these challenges, family-owned businesses remain an important component of the global economy, contributing significantly to employment, innovation, and economic growth. According to Kotter, & Schlesinger, (2008) at the global level, family-owned businesses are a significant and growing segment of the economy. According to the Global Family Business Index, family-owned businesses account for approximately 70% of all businesses worldwide, and contribute significantly to job creation and economic growth. However, managing change in family-owned businesses can be particularly challenging due to the complex interplay between ownership structures, family dynamics, and cultural factors. By exploring the effect of employee engagement and enablement on change management practices in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya, the authors provide valuable insights that can be applied by family-owned businesses worldwide. Family businesses constitute 80% of business enterprises in the United States of America contributing 50% of gross domestic product (GDP). Similarly, 60% to 70% of all SMEs in Europe are family businesses that generate between 45% and 65% (GDP). Family businesses represent 79% of all businesses in Germany that employ 44% of the working population. While 90% to 98% of businesses in Italy, India and Latin America are family businesses (Visser & Chiloane-Tsoka, 2014; Poza, 2014). Studies reveal 70% of family-owned businesses don't survive to the second generation while those that survive to the third and fourth generation are 12% and 3% respectively (Byrd & Megginson, 2013).

Change is an ever-permanent feature that organizations encounter due to dynamics of external environment and effective change management is an important assurance to sustain business growth. According to Osisioma (2004) modern day business management should always expect and regard change as a critical element that influences competitive success against a turbulent changing operating environment and should develop a positive attitude and mindset to it. Daniel (2019) further opines that strategic change is more involving both in scope and longevity than operational change which has a shorter-term focus. Changes that are transformational, visionary, organization wide, focusing on the long term both in purpose and mission are termed as strategic changes. According to Osisioma (2004), the challenges of change management are compounded by regional differences in culture, economic

development, and institutional frameworks. In Africa, family-owned businesses are particularly important as they represent a significant source of employment and economic growth. However, they also face unique challenges, including access to finance, skills development, and market opportunities. By examining the effect of employee engagement and enablement on change management practices in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya, the authors provide valuable insights that can be applied across the African continent (Byrd & Megginson, 2013). According to Burnes (2004) on the East African region, where family-owned businesses are a significant and growing segment of the economy. In this context, the authors explore the role of employee engagement and enablement in facilitating successful change management in family-owned supermarkets. They identify a number of key factors that can contribute to the success of change management initiatives, including employee involvement, communication, and training. These findings have important implications for businesses operating in the East African region, and can help to inform the development of effective change management strategies.

Mugendi, (2021) stated that where family-owned businesses account for a significant proportion of the economy. In this context, the authors examine the effect of employee engagement and enablement on change management practices in family-owned supermarkets, using the case study of Quickmart Supermarket. They identify a number of key success factors, including the importance of leadership, communication, and employee involvement. These findings have important implications for family-owned businesses in Kenya, and can help to inform the development of effective change management strategies. According to Nwoye, Nwuke, & Onoyima (2020) the challenges of managing change in family-owned businesses are significant, but not insurmountable. By examining the effect of employee engagement and enablement on change management practices in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya, the authors provide valuable insights that can be applied at the global, continental, regional, and national levels. Their findings underscore the importance of employee engagement and enablement in facilitating successful change management, and provide a blueprint for family-owned businesses seeking to remain competitive in a rapidly changing business environment (Hourmatallah & Khalis 2020).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Organizations must continually adapt new strategies to achieve a strategic fit with the ever-dynamic environmental changes. Managing change is a complex task, a fact many case studies and various literature consensually agree on. In a five-year study conducted by McKinsey consulting firm on organizations that underwent organizational change, out of 1536 companies surveyed only 38% of managers agreed the process succeeded. The challenge is more evident in surviving today's competitive environment since organizations are forced to quickly respond and adapt to survive the pressures of the external environmental forces (Hourmatallah & Khalis, 2019).

The livelihood of 85% of private sector employees globally depends on family business which is an important consideration that should attract more focus and attention in organizational and management literature mainstream studies (Cassia et al., 2012). Due to rapid changes in the technology space and global economy, development of new change capabilities is crucial to enable family-owned businesses survive the turbulent environments (Canterino, 2013). Sharmilee (2014) and Mlobeli (2018) indicate that family-owned businesses fail within 3-4 years of their existence and those which exist for more than 5 years barely survive the transition.

The Kenyan retail and wholesale sector was the 6th largest contributor to national Gross domestic product, contributing 7.9 % in 2021 recording a drop from previous year's 8.1 % (KNBS, 2022). The sector is one of the largest private employers of which supermarkets constitute a major segment of the sector (Wambui, 2022). The Kenya supermarket business environment landscape has witnessed rapid proliferation of small players, entrants of foreign firms, mergers and acquisitions of big and medium players. The retail industry in Kenya is largely dominated by family-owned and run business entities.

Mergers and acquisitions and rapid store expansion are some of the change initiatives Kenya supermarket retail players have engaged but failed to achieve desired growth objectives or resuscitate loss making streak. An example of a failed acquisition strategy in the Kenyan retail sector is the Choppies acquisition of Ukwala supermarket in 2016. The merger encountered turbulence and four years later, Choppies closed shop and exited the market (The East African, 2020). Retail chain Mulleys Supermarket, which is family owned announced the closure of five of its 10 branches, in a shock downsizing plan that saw hundreds of staff laid off in an ambitious expansion program that went the wrong way (Business Daily, Nov 2021). One of the problems that have plagued major supermarkets in Kenya is that they are a family ran businesses with little external oversight (Mugendi, 2021).

Several studies have been done in investigating the effect of employee engagement and enablement on change management practices in family-owned supermarkets. Carentinio and Cirella (2013) examined organizational transformations in an Italian family-owned business company. A study gap is the focus was not on Kenyan supermarkets. Otinda (2015) studied change management of a merger and acquisition at L'oreal a consumer company in the fast-moving goods sector, Daniel (2019) studied effect of change management on performance of firms in Nigeria, while Mwiriki (2015) studied strategic change management and performance of large supermarkets in Nairobi County, both studies focused on the effect of change management on performance. The mentioned studies reveal conceptual and context gaps that this study seemed to examine. This study explore the effect of employee engagement and enablement on change management practices in family-owned supermarkets.

1.3. Specific Objectives

To analyze the effect of employee engagement and enablement on change management practices in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya. A case study of Quickmart Supermarket

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

The anchor theory guiding the study objectives is the Kotter eight step model explaining the phases a change process undergoes highlighting the importance of a leadership that creates urgency, shares the intended vision with employees while guiding them and anchoring the changes through sustained reinforced communication, alignment, and involvement of the entire organization's employees.

2.1.1 Kotter 8 Step Model

The Kotter change management model, which outlines a sequence of eight steps for successful organizational change, serves as the foundation for this study. According to Kotter (1995), these steps involve creating a sense of urgency among leadership or change agents, forming a guiding coalition, defining a clear vision and strategy, communicating the change vision effectively, empowering broad-based action, generating and articulating short-term wins, consolidating gains and producing more change, and anchoring new approaches in the culture to sustain the change.

The research study variables originate their relevance from Kotter's eight steps of change management. According to Kotter any change process must have a leadership committed towards facilitating the change process, a change leader/manager/agent that effectively guides the process by creating readiness for change adoption among the employees, through effective communication, top management support and employee involvement and enablement. The process outcome is aimed at reducing resistance to change and ensuring successful change adoption. The steps are meant to detach the organization from the current state, manage the transition process towards adopting the new change and reinforce the new change culture. The theory eight steps anchor and illuminates the guidance path of the study variables.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

The empirical literature review examined several studies conducted in change management as a practice in various sectors. The review examined findings from empirical studies which provided a guide to the study research framework and provided insights in addition to ones captured in the theoretical literature review.

2.2.1 Employee Engagement, Enablement and Change Management Practices

Mwangi and Lubasi (2017) undertook a study on "Organization preparedness to change and employee commitment in African Development Bank in Kenya". The research was guided by three organizational preparedness component variables and their influencing relationship on employee commitment to change. The organizational preparedness component independent variables were strategic change envisioning, engaging stakeholders in change processes and empowerment of change agents while the dependent variable was employees' commitment to change. Study revealed strategic change envisioning and empowering change agent had a positive influence on employees' organizational commitment to change.

Wakonyo (2014) studied change management practices and performance of police service in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The change management practices studied were employee involvement, effective communication and senior management support. The study findings revealed the three change management practices showed a positive influence on the National Police Service performance. According to the study, employees were not involved in decision making processes and did not own change processes as a result. Employee concerns were not considered during the change process creating room for change resistance. The study recommended that the Inspector General of Police should ensure greater inclusion of employees in the change process since they were the key stakeholders who could play a determining role in successful change management and implementation in the National Police Service.

Mbinya (2012) study focus was on employee involvement, employee cynicism and organizational change at the city council of Nairobi. The results of the study showed the majority of respondents agreed changes were necessary and legitimate, made work easier, service delivery noted increased efficiency and all these positive indicators enhanced the council's public image. Respondents expressed low levels of cynicism on task load being intimidating, reasons for change not being availed or hidden agenda brought by the change that would lead to negative changes in their lives. The respondents positively responded to the need for training and development which was generally viewed as a path to career growth and development that reduced the level of employee cynicism during the change period. Systematic and gradual introduction to the organizational change using participatory change management was advocated by the study respondents.

Mwiriki (2015) studied strategic change management practices in large supermarkets in Nairobi, Kenya. The study sought to identify strategic management practices adopted by supermarkets in Nairobi County and their relationship to organizational performance. The study adopted a descriptive survey. The study population comprised of the four leading supermarkets within Nairobi County. The study found that the large supermarkets in Nairobi have implemented change programs. The study results found that supermarkets had used different change management strategies with most using effective communication.

It was also noted that the supermarkets had adopted different strategic change management practices with majority using private label brands. The majority of the supermarkets faced challenges in change management like incompatibility to organization structure, resistance to change, cultural diversity, inadequacy of funds and ineffective leadership. The study found that strategic management practices affected performance to a great extent.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the relationship between the change management practice determinants which are the study independent variable namely employee engagement and enablement and its effect on the dependent variable which is organizational resistance to change.

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable
Employee Engagement and Enablement	⟶	**Organizational Resistance to Change**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed method research design. The mixed method was utilized in the interview guide and in questionnaire as research instruments. A descriptive cross sectional research design was used to define the occurrence of a phenomenon or to compare factors in an organization at a particular time. The descriptive cross-sectional design compares factors in an organization at a particular time as opposed to longitudinal designs where variables are studied over a period of time. (Saunders *et al.,* 2016).

3.2 Target Population

The target population for this study comprised 240 management employees drawn from management levels 1 to 4, the senior most being level 1 in descending order to level 4. The four levels constitute the CEO, departmental heads, category section heads, branch managers and assistants and other middle management staff working in Quick mart Supermarket.

Table 1: Target Population

Rank / Department	level 1	level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Totals
Snr management	4				4
Finance		1	38		39
Commercial		1	8	50	59
Operations		1	24	86	111
Hr		1	2	1	4
IT		1	7		8
Audit			1		1
Compliance			1		1
Ehs		1			1
Marketing			2	2	4
Supplies		1	6	1	8
Totals	**4**	**7**	**89**	**140**	**240**

Source -   Retail Association of Kenya (RETRAK) October 2022

The study drew its sample from the population size of Quickmart Senior managers, departmental heads, senior and middle level managers since they were solely responsible for decisions concerning organizational change. The study used stratified random sampling techniques. Stratified random

sampling was used to select four strata namely, management levels one to four comprising of top leadership, executive committee, and head of departments or sections.

3.3 Sample Size

Table 2: Sample Size Table

Rank level Department	level 1	level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Totals
Snr management	4				4
Finance		1	23		24
Commercial		1	5	30	36
Operations		1	14	53	68
Hr		1	1	1	3
IT		1	4		5
Audit			1		1
Compliance			1		1
Ehs		1			1
Marketing			1	1	2
Supplies		1	3	1	5
Totals	**4**	**7**	**53**	**86**	**150**

The researcher used a mixed method research design that involved an interview guide targeting the Senior management and the questionnaire targeting management levels one to four as the primary tools for data collection. The research made of focused group and interviews to collected data significant to the research questions. According to Nyumba et al., (2018), focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social challenges and issues.

The main objective was to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of Quickmart broader population. In addition, the interview guide contained semi-structured questions covering all the variables under this study. The questionnaire was also employed to obtain responses from the sample of respondents selected.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

A questionnaire is a research instrument that collects data from sample respondents, and its objective is to breakdown the research objectives into specific questions and answers to generate required research data (Kothari, 2010). The instrument assisted the researcher to maintain confidentiality and save time in collecting the large amount of data.

The questionnaire was structured in two parts namely, part A and part B. Part B consisted of four sections aligned with the independent and dependent variables and the questionnaire structure corresponding with the study objectives. A 5-point Likert scale evaluation from strongly agreed (SA) to strongly disagreed (SD) measured responses. Secondary data was obtained from the publications, online sources, library sources, annual reports, and policy documents. These supported the findings from primary data.

A focused study was conducted on 8 regional managers, and one-on-one interviews using the interview guide conducted for the CEO, Quickmart founders and other executive levels.

4. 0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Descriptive Statistics:

Table 3: Employee engagement and enablement

Management's close involvement of employees during the change implementation process enhances easier adaptation to the new change					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	2	2	2
	Disagree	6	4	4.1	6.1

	Neutral	4	2	2	8.2
	Agree	72	48	49	57.1
	Strongly agree	63	42	42.9	100
	Total	148	98	100	

The Organization's employee skills competence training programs normally lead to faster employee adaption to new changes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	66	44	44.9	44.9
	Disagree	51	34	34.7	79.6
	Neutral	18	12	12.2	91.8
	Agree	9	6	6.1	98
	Strongly agree	3	2	2	100
	Total	98	98	100	
Missing	System	3	2		

Lack of resource facilitation support leads to low employee motivation and slow change implementation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	24	16	16.3	16.3
	Disagree	36	24	24.5	40.8
	Neutral	42	28	28.6	69.4
	Agree	27	18	18.4	87.8
	Strongly agree	18	12	12.2	100
	Total	147	98	100	
Missing	System	3	2		

The existence of change performance appraisal and reward schemes motivates to adopt and implement new changes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	2	2.1	2.1
	Neutral	12	8	8.5	10.6
	Agree	78	52	55.3	66
	Strongly agree	48	32	34	100
	Total	141	94	100	
Missing	System	9	6		

Employee active participation and empowerment improve their support for change implementation and adoption

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	63	42	44.7	44.7
	Disagree	54	36	38.3	83
	Neutral	12	8	8.5	91.5
	Agree	3	2	2.1	93.6
	Strongly agree	9	6	6.4	100
	Total	141	94	100	
Missing	System	9	6		
Total		100	100		

Employees at Quickmart showed positive views on the effectiveness of their engagement and enablement to the adoption of the change in management. Most participants agreed that involving employees during the change management practice enhanced their adoption of new changes. The results were as follows;42.9% strongly agreed, and 49% agreed that if they were involved in change management processes there would be a high likelihood that they would adopt to the new changes. This showed that employee participation granted them a sense of ownership and therefore improved their chances of change adoption to the new changes.

Majority of the participants strongly disagreed that the competence training programs led to faster employee adaption to new changes. This meant that that the employees had not embraced the competence training initiated by the management that was meant to enable them to navigate through the new changes.   44.9 % of the participants strongly disagreed.   The participants were neutral as to whether lack of resource facilitation support led to low employee motivation and slow change implementation as follows; 16.3% strongly agreed, 24.5 % agreed, 28.6 % were neutral, 18.4% agreed, and 12.2% strongly agreed.

In addition, 55.3% of participants strongly agreed that the existence of change performance appraisal and reward schemes motivated them to adopt and implement new changes, while 34% strongly agreed.   The appraisal mechanism and rewards schemes seemed to have scored the highest as opposed to employees being taken through competence training. The Quickmart management needs to seek to understand the employees and together with the employees co-create change initiatives that are acceptable by a majority. Also, they should educate the employees on their role in the change management process.

4.3 Regression Analysis

4.3 Relationship between organizational Resistance to Change and Change Adoption

The researcher used Chi-Square to determine the relationship between organizational resistance to change and change Adoption. This gave many combinations of variables but focused on the significant at a 10% level of significance.

Table 14: Chi-Square between successful adoption of change depends on employee engagement and my commitment level towards implementing and adopting are not affected by the quality of the change management process

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.674a	16	0.097
Likelihood Ratio	20.169	16	0.213
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.015	1	0.903
N of Valid Cases	69		
23 cells (92.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .09.			

From the results, X^2 (16) = 23.67, p = .097 suggested that there was a relationship between employee engagement and change adoption. This indicated that when the employees were engaged through effective communication their commitment to the adoption to the new changes was effective. The findings of the study showed that engaging the employees through effective communication led to consistency in the way they reacted to changes during the change management process.

5.0 SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Summary of findings

According to the study findings, employees agree that engagement is a measure of how much they are committed to their job and how much they care about the company's goals and objectives. The study emphasizes on the importance of effective employee capacity enablement infused by new knowledge and skills learnt to effectively implement the change process. Employee enablement defines the process of creating an enabling environment of employee involvement, skills development, and empowerment throughout the change process to minimize employee resistance.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research study has found that employee engagement and enablement are essential for successful change management practices in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya. The study found that family-owned supermarkets face unique challenges such as resistance to change and lack of resources, which require innovative solutions from top leadership to overcome. Employee engagement and enablement can help to address these challenges and create a culture of innovation and change in the supermarket industry.

5.3 Recommendations

The management should understand that resistance to change is a normal phenomenon when managing change and therefore should always anticipate resistance to change and devise ways to manage resistance. For instance, the change leadership should appoint power centers and change resistors to the role of change agents instead of sidelining them. Continuous messages of motivation to employees and putting in place reward mechanisms and creating a performance-based culture would allow for effective change.

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