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Philis Ndema, David Njoroge, PhD & Susan Nkanata, PhD

The Strategic JOURNAL of Business & Change MANAGEMENT
ISSN: 2312-9492 www.strategicjournals.com

Vol. 13, Iss.2, pp 586 – 597, June 22, 2026. www.strategicjournals.com, © Strategic Journals

EFFECT OF GENDER DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KITUI

[1] Philis Ndema, [2] David Njoroge, PhD & [3] Susan Nkanata, PhD

[1] MBA (Human Resource Management), Kirinyaga University, Kenya
[2,3] Lecturer, Department of Business, Kirinyaga University, Kenya

Accepted: June 12, 2026

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.61426/sjbcm.v13i2.3544

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the effect of gender diversity on employee performance in the County Government of Kitui. The study covered employees from the County Government of Kitui in Kenya. The study was anchored on the social categorization theory. The research design that was used in the study was the mixed research design. The collection of data was done through interviews, secondary sources and questionnaires filled out by the employees and management. The target population was two thousand three hundred employees (2,300). A sample of three hundred and forty employees was obtained using Yamane's formula, and the sampling technique used was stratified random sampling. The statistical model used in data analysis was the multiple linear regression. Data was entered into the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) and analyzed statistically by use of descriptive and inferential statistics and the results presented through tables, figures. The results indicate that gender diversity significantly improves employee performance. As a result, companies that support equitable gender representation and adopt inclusive workplace policies can be expected to be more productive, creative, and effective overall. In conclusion, the results suggested that the positive link between employee performance and gender diversity was noted in generational and gender diversity. This means organizations that effectively manage differences in age, gender representation and job roles might have superior employee performance versus those that do not manage diversity. The findings of this study provided valuable insights into the importance of investing in gender diversity and the benefits it can bring to organizations. The study also found that there is a need for organizations to provide relevant diversity programs, conduct regular skill gap assessments and improve the employee performance.

Key Words: *Gender Diversity, Gender Representation, Inclusive Workplace Policies*

CITATION: Ndema, P., Njoroge, D., & Nkanata, S. (2026). Effect of gender diversity on employee performance in the county government of Kitui**.** *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 13 (2), 586 – 597.

INTRODUCTION

Diversity is the existence of people who are different in many aspects, mainly gender, country of origin, religious beliefs, language, race, ethnicity, and health status. Workforce diversity refers to the presence of employees in the same workplace who have different social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds (Steiner & Tuljapurkar, 2023). Employees may have similarities and differences in physical abilities, age, cultural background, race, gender, sexual orientation, professional qualification, taste and religion, geographic region, attitudes, and perception at the workplace (Tajeddini et al., 2023). Workforce diversity is the perception and differences of employees at the workplace about each other in terms of language, religion, race, and gender (Barnes & Grayer, 2023).

The textile industry of Pakistan, that is Nishant Mills, offers large employment opportunities under local and international laws. Pakistan is a major exporter of textile products such as fabric, cotton yarn in the world. Employees working in this sector have various skills and abilities that contribute to the overall performance of this industry. They present knowledge on workforce diversity as antecedents of employee performance and indicate that many organizations engage in diversity management. The role of workforce diversity and diversity management in employee performance is very important in the textile industry of the world, as well as in Pakistan (Abbas & Halog, 2021).

In South Africa, organizations in Cape Town in the Western Cape employ women not for diversity reasons but because of mandatory legal requirements, which make their male counterparts segregate them, hence contributing very little to the performance of the organization. Racial and gender discrimination is rife, prominent challenge even today. In the education sector, the workforce was characterized by racial and gender discrimination. The white male academic and non-academic dominated the higher education workforce in South Africa, which further promoted white minority supremacy in the organizations (Bor & Wanyoike, 2020).

Workforce diversity has been very crucial in HR because of globalization. Among the key diverse characteristics in HR are age, race, social status, ethnicity, gender, education level, skills, religion, norms, and beliefs. They focused mainly on the middle and lower-level management of ABC Bank Westlands. Workforce diversity encompassed both the distinctions and similarities presented among employees, and age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and handicap were among the many demographic factors in play in the bank. (Bor & Wanyoike, 2019).

The Kenyan constitution, chapter four, section two, article twenty-seven, laid a robust framework aimed at ensuring equality across various spheres of life, including economic, cultural, and social sectors. It championed the representation and inclusion of individuals from all walks of life, particularly in public sector appointments, marking a progressive step towards embracing diversity. Before these changes, the lack of specific policies to enforce conventions and treaties resulted in notable disparities within public institutions, especially concerning disability, gender, and ethnicity. Existing laws and policies, perpetuating inequality across the board, often reinforced discriminatory practices (Thompson, 2020).

One of the 47 counties that comprise Kenya is Kitui County Government, as stated in the Kenyan Constitution of 2010. The county seat may be found an extra 170 kilometers southeast of the Nairobi metropolitan area. There is an estimated total area of 30,496 km2. Seven more counties are bordered by Kitui Counties. In the north, it has a border with the counties of Meru and Tharaka Nithi. In the west, it shares a boundary with the counties of Embu, Makueni, and Machakos. In the east and southeast, it shares a border with the Tana River, and in the south, it divides with Taita Taveta. There are a total of 1,147,200 people living in Kitui County, with 602,002 males and 545,195 females,

as stated by the Kitui County Government in the year 2022. Kitui County is comprised of eight sub-counties, which are as follows: Central, East, West, Rural, South, Mwingi North, Mwingi West, and Mwingi Central (CGK, 2021). Not all of the county is dry and semi-arid; certain areas are really rather fruitful. Diversity is a defining feature of the county.

Statement of the Problem

In the 21st century, there remains growing concern that workforce diversity is not being effectively managed to enhance employee performance, despite national and county-level policies that locally promote inclusivity. Workforce diversity has seen organizations benefit in a myriad of ways, among them having management that manages workforce diversity and its ethics, such as fighting discrimination, fostering inclusiveness, acknowledging the value of diversity, and finally dealing with losses due to prejudice and legal actions brought against the organization (Devoe, 2020).

Despite existence of studies on the link between workforce diversity and employee performance, various research gaps exist. According to Wagana (2021), the administration of Kitui County Government had blamed inadequate human resource capabilities for the inadequate quality of its services in workforce diversity. The HRM function has to keep becoming better if they want to keep being as productive as they are. This may be achieved by the effective implementation of strategies pertaining to human resource management which have a significant effect on the employee performance (Muthee, 2021).

The County Government of Kitui was used for this study due to workforce working under unique social and environmental circumstances. This provides a study on workforce diversity due to concerns that it has achieved the one-third gender rule of employment, with a bias towards female representation in some sectors. The county has more male employees, representing 53.20% as compared to the female employees, representing 46.80%. The ethnic diversity audit of 2023 showed that the Kamba ethnic group, heavily dominates the Kitui County Government public service by 80.6%. There are also many generational gaps with each generation having different values, learning preferences, technological differences, and motivations.

These challenges may be exacerbated by ineffective diversity management practices, such as different educational backgrounds, unconscious bias, lack of representation in leadership, and failure to accommodate diverse employee needs. There is a notable gap in empirical studies assessing how diversity management specifically affects employee performance within county governments. Although previous studies in Kenya have explored workforce diversity, most have been concentrated in the private sector or national-level institutions, hence the need for this research in the public sector (Government of Kenya, (2022).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of gender diversity on the performance of employees in the County Government of Kitui.

The research was guided by the following hypothesis;

- There is no significant effect of gender diversity on employee performance in the County Government of Kitui.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

The Social Categorization Theory

Tajfel (1979) and Turner (1987) propose this theory on the basis of explaining overt, explicit, or easily identifiable dissimilarity (such as gender, age, ethnicity, and belief) that exists between individuals and unveils the association of a specific social category. This theory is based on the premises that are already advanced in the social identity theory. Categorization refers to the grouping of individuals depending on such attributes as gender, age,

race/ethnicity, religion, status, and tenure. These classifications are socially constructed when a large number of people start making similar conclusions about people with similar attributes. According to the theory, diversity in a workgroup of excellent features like age and gender will not contribute to positive group performance, as it will be counterproductive to group practices. The theory can be associated with gender diversity since it has gender inclusion policies that lead to equality in the treatment of all employees. This creates a sense of importance for them and also enhances their motivation levels, thus propagating better performance of the employees within the organization.

Conceptual Framework

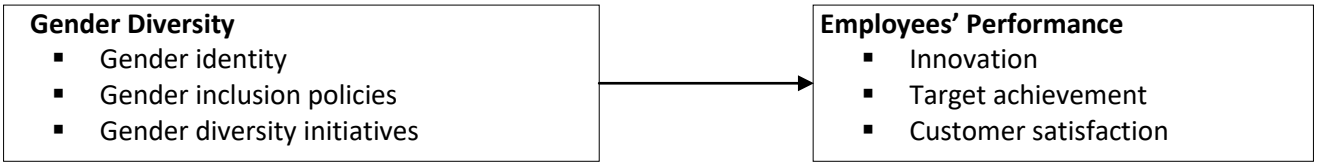


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Gender Diversity

Gender diversity is the act of providing equal access to resources and opportunities to all employees in the organization, where there is inclusion of everyone in the decision-making and other activities. Gender diversity will tend to look at gender identity, gender inclusion policies, and gender diversity initiatives, like diversity training awareness. It involves offering fair treatment and fair gender equality (Roberson, 2019). Gender identity defines how employees express themselves promoting equal treatment through gender equality and ensuring that all employees have equal opportunities regardless of how they define themselves, thus improving employee performance. Gender inclusion policies include practices that create a feeling of being valued, respected, and provided with equal opportunities in the organization. Gender inclusion policies lead to improved employee morale and satisfaction, increase innovation and employee creativity, and improve the organizational reputation. It includes equal promotion and pay, flexible working hours, and unbiased performance reviews (Siri et al., 2022). Gender diversity initiatives include diversity training awareness, diversity mentorship programs, and gender equality-training programs. These gender diversity initiatives define the performance levels of each employee and ensure that. They will be trained as per their requirements thus; gender equality will be upheld.

Empirical Literature

Due to the rising relevance of Japanese female workers in the face of global competition, Ayuningtyas and Fadli (2023) stressed the requirement for a more in-depth knowledge of gender-related problems in the administration of organizations. They observed that paternalism, lifetime employment, rank-based promotions, and the promotion of corporate continuity were all examples of conventional management practices that had traditionally benefited males. These practices were now experiencing a shift. The findings showed that women's representation in management is positively correlated with financial metrics like Tobin's Q, improving the performance of the female workers.

Ranta and Ylinen (2023) sought to demonstrate the interdependence between wage disparities in management and workplace diversity and their effect on reinforcing the groundwork of machine learning. The methodology embraced the qualitative approach by examining and researching past articles on diversity in the workplace concerning gender diversity through a sample size

of Finnish companies, besides considering what factors can be used to improve workplace diversity in such companies. The researchers found out that the presence of gender diversity positively influenced the establishment of the basis of workplace diversity within Finnish companies that enhanced the performance of employees. The variables that would influence workplace diversity were determined, which involved the size of the organization, interest area, and type of managerial jobs.

Research done by Nakagawa (2022) to determine the relation between gender diversity and the performance of a Japanese firm noted that a more gender-diversified firm has a better performance compared to a less-diverse firm in terms of gender. The diversification in the gender workforce creates a sense of inclusiveness and belonging to the organization among the workers and leads to a greater feeling of job fulfillment among employees. However, the study noted that gender diversity could lead to stress among the employees, hence a negative working relationship, which will affect organizational performance. Nakagawa's findings are supported by various theories, such as social identity theory, attraction theory, and social categorization, all of which postulate that gender diversity may result in employee groupings based on different backgrounds, such as biological or social similarities.

Selin (2022) had the purpose of investigating the effects of diversity and inclusion practices used in workplaces at Marriott International Inc. and the effect on employee performance and satisfaction with the guests. The researcher used the case study design on the Marriott Hotel, and data were gathered by interviewing the hotel employees and the financial and non-financial statements. The paper found that the approach to the principles of diversity implementation in the workplace by the Marriott group of companies played a considerable role in the retention of skilled employees and enhanced their performance level. Welcome and recognition, which had an impact on the overall performance of Marriott.

Nyagadza et al. (2022) were interested in exploring how workplace diversity influences labour market equality and inclusiveness in Zimbabwe. The data were quantitative, based on 150 employees with various organizations within Zimbabwe that are private. The researchers found that the shrinkage of workplace diversity was not that high in the organizations under investigation, besides the wage disparity between genders, which caused some implication on performance and the appearance of certain conservative cultural practices incompatible with the contemporary work requirements.

Odhiambo et al. (2020) sought to determine the relationship between gender diversity and employee performance of public universities in Western Kenya. The study targeted four public universities in Western Kenya, where the 120 heads of departments were selected as the research respondents. A mixed design method was adopted, and data were collected using the primary method. Specifically, the study adopted a survey data collection method. The study findings established a positive relationship between gender diversity and employee performance. The recommendations were that the number of female employees should be increased in the institutions to meet the affirmative policies of the government. More studies need to be carried out in different institutions in western Kenya to determine whether the findings of this study apply.

Mwangi (2021) examined the effect of workforce diversity management on worker performance in Kenya's civil service. A descriptive research design was embraced. To gather primary data, a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire was employed. Through the review of theoretical and empirical literature, secondary data were acquired. The results showed that having diversity and inclusion policies in place within an organization has improved the representation of diverse people across the board, improved employee performance,

addressed the social processes that arise when diversity exists, and created an environment within the organization that encourages the full inclusion of diverse people.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in the study was the mixed research design which allowed for both qualitative and quantitative data approaches. The target population was two thousand three hundred employees (2300). They included the senior-level management, the middle-level management, and the junior staff. The sampling procedure used was the stratified random sampling method. The sample size was of three hundred and forty employees (340) who were obtained using Yamane's formula. The data collection methods used in the study were questionnaires, interviews, and secondary data. McLeod (2020) states that a questionnaire is among the data collection tools that collect information by having the respondents fill it in.

The data responses of the respondents were subjected to editing, classification, coding, and tabulation by the researcher. Tables that represented the frequency and percentage distribution, measures of central tendency such as mean and standard deviation, and measures of variability such as the variance were all descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics is a mathematical approach that uses the probability theory to deduce the characteristics of a population based on the study of the characteristics of a sample of data representing a population (Cooper and Schindler, 2016). It included hypothesis testing and regression analysis where simple linear regression analysis was used in the analysis since it allowed the researcher to make predictions about a large population based on a smaller sample. The independent variables were linked with the dependent variable, employee performance, according to Kepha (2019) and Agoi (2020). The quantitative and qualitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The data collected was tabulated and presented using figures, and tables.

FINDINGS

Response Rate

The study was done to know the effect of workforce diversity on the employee performance in the County Government of Kitui, Kenya. The questionnaires were handed out, interviews conducted and secondary data obtained from the sample population and two hundred and fifty (250) responses were obtained fully after the data collection for the study. This presents 75% response rate, which is above the 70% response rate threshold (Mugenda and Mugenda 2013). Hence, the sample size was sufficient for the research. As a result, the researcher was able to carry out the development of demographic data as well as data interpretation and descriptive and inferential analysis.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Gender Diversity

The study sought to assess the effect of gender diversity on the employee performance in the County Government of Kitui, Kenya. Based on the responses it was indicated that gender diversity had a major effect on the employee performance. The analysis was done using SPSS. The Likert type responses were analyzed by use of Mean and standard deviations. The findings were presented in the table below.

Table 1: Gender Diversity and Employee Performance

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Employees have a way of expressing and defining themselves that promotes gender equality and equal opportunities	3.40	1.281
All employees in the organization are treated fairly regardless of their gender whether a male or a female	3.84	0.876
The practices and gender policies in the organization create a feeling of respect, and equal opportunities to all employees	3.96	1.134
There is diversity training awareness, mentorship programs and gender training programs for all employees	2.22	1.265
The organization provides both male and female employees equal opportunities for growth and advancement	3.85	1.096

As illustrated in Table 1 above, the study found out that the statement on the practices and gender policies in the organization create a feeling of respect, and equal opportunities to all employees the highest mean at 3.96 which employees strongly agree that gender diversity had a positive impact on the employee performance. The statement that the organization provides both male and female employees with equal opportunities for growth and advancement had a mean of 3.85 which meant the employees agree while the statement on all employees in the organization are treated fairly regardless of their gender whether a male or a female had a mean of 3.84 which the employees agree with. The statement on employees have a way of expressing and defining themselves that promotes gender equality and equal opportunities had a mean of 3.40 which employees agreed with while the statement on there is diversity training awareness, mentorship programs and gender training programs for all employees had the lowest mean of 2.22 which meant the employees disagree with it having a positive effect on the employee performance The standard deviation was over one which indicated all items were within one standard deviation. This was an indication that the items were not widely dispersed apart and therefore measured the same concept ie generational diversity. The standard deviation showed that the values were within close range, the items were not widely dispersed apart, an indication that all the items have a high level of internal consistency and therefore measure the same concept.

Employee Performance

The study sought to assess the effect of workforce diversity on the employee performance in the County Government of Kitui, Kenya. Based on the responses it was indicated that workforce diversity had a major effect on employee performance. The analysis was done using SPSS. The Likert type responses were analyzed by use of mean and standard deviation. The findings were presented in the table 2 below.

Table 2: Employee Performance

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Socioeconomic diversity positively affects team and employee performance in my organization	2.88	1.459
Education diversity leads to innovative ways of performing. the job which leads to high performance	3.69	1.275
The presence of age diversity within organizations. has contributed to improved employee effectiveness.	4.16	1.136
Gender diversity affects the performance of employees in my organization	2.82	1.346
Workforce diversity improves the customer service leading to increased satisfaction	3.51	1.490

As illustrated in Table 2 above, the study found out that the employees strongly agreed with statement that the presence of age diversity within organizations has contributed to improved employee effectiveness which had the highest mean at 4.16. The statement that education diversity leads to innovative ways of performing the job which leads to high performance had a mean of 3.69 was agreeable while the statement on the workforce diversity improves the customer service leading to increased satisfaction had a mean of 3.51 was also agreeable. They disagreed with the statement that socioeconomic diversity positively affects team and employee performance in my organization had a mean of 2.88 and also disagreed with the statement that the gender diversity affects the performance of employees in my organization which had the lowest mean of 2.82. The standard deviation was over one which indicated all items were within one standard deviation. This was an indication that the items were not widely dispersed apart and therefore measured the same concept i.e. generational diversity. The standard deviation showed that the values were within close range and the items were not widely dispersed apart, an indication that all the items have a high level of internal consistency and therefore measure the same concept.

Inferential Statistical Analysis

Correlation Analysis

Analysis was performed on correlations to evaluate the direction and degree of the relationships between various aspects of gender diversity and levels of employee performance. Aspects of diversity were independent variables namely: Gender Diversity while Employee Performance was considered the dependent variable.

Table 3: correlation analysis

	Gender Diversity	Employee Performance
Gender Diversity	1.0000	
Employee Performance	0.7318	1.0000

Gender Diversity has a strong positive correlation with employee productivity at 0.7318.

Regression Analysis

The coefficients of determination were calculated to determine the variation between the employee performance and the gender. The results were presented in the tables below

Regression Analysis of Gender Diversity

Table 4: model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Squared	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.5714	0.4692	0.6476	0.4934

There was a correlation between gender diversity and Employee Performance (R=0.571). In the case of the R squared, or coefficient of determination, we can express 46.92% of all variation in Employee Performance explained by Gender Diversity. When considering the Adjusted R squared, or coefficient of determination adjusted for number of independent variables, we find that the model continues to provide a high degree of explanatory capability (Adjusted R2 = 64.76%). As indicated by results, the gender diversity, when considered had a significant impact on employee performance. The model's high degree of explanatory ability suggests that if organizations focus on improving their practices surrounding diversity, they will see improvements in overall performance outcomes.

Table 5: Anova test

	Df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1.0000	18.3386	18.3386	74.765	0.0000
Residual	62.0000	34.7658	0.3246		
Total	63.0000	53.1044			

According to ANOVA results, we have an F-statistic value of 74.765, and a p-value associated with that corresponds to a (significance level) of .0000. As the p-value is less than .05, we say the regression is statistically significant. We can therefore conclude that the gender diversity significantly predicted Employee Performance.

Tabe 6: gender diversity coefficients

	Coefficient B	Standard Error	Beta	T Value	Significance P value
Intercept	0.2480	0.1748		0.4187	0.1572
Job Diversity	0.9150	0.0541	0.4280	16.9123	0.0000

Y = 0.2480 + 0.9150 X1

The regression coefficient for Gender Diversity (i.e. a unit increase in Gender Diversity will lead to an expected rise in Employee Performance of 0.915) reflects a direct relationship between Gender Diversity and Employee Performance, as there is a positive correlation between these two variables. The p-value for Gender Diversity is 0.0000, which is less than the 0.05 significance level, meaning that the positive effect of Gender Diversity on Employee Performance is statistically significant. The results indicate that gender diversity significantly improves employee performance. As a result, companies that support equitable gender representation and adopt inclusive workplace policies can expect to be more productive, creative, and effective overall. Gender Diversity failed to be accepted.

Hypothesis Testing

H_0: There is significant effect of Gender Diversity on Employee Performance in the County Government of Kitui.

H_0: The hypothesis on effect of Gender Diversity on Employee Performance at the County Government of Kitui failed to be accepted.

From table 6 above, the p-value for Gender Diversity was 0.0000, which was less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H01) was rejected. The conclusion of the study showed that the Materially Significant Positive Relationship exists, or Gender Diversity positively influences employee performance at the County Government of Kitui. The positive Beta coefficient (β = 0.4280) indicates that an increase in Gender Diversity will enhance the level of Employee Performance.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this study suggested that there exists a positive correlation between gender diversity and Employee Performance. The correlation coefficient suggested that increasing levels of gender diversity within an organization resulted in increase in employee performance. The results of this study indicated that gender diversity clearly had a strong effect on employee performance. Gender diversity also has a positive effect on performance, by providing inclusive gender representation, which supports balanced teams and creates better perspectives in the workplace for everyone. It became apparent that there was no gender discrimination on hiring and recruitment processes. All employees were given fair treatment whether male or female. A performance criterion for success was not expected to be higher for males than for females. All employees were equal. No one suffered inferiority or superiority due to his/her gender. The results showed that employee performance increased dramatically when gender diversity was present. Mwangi (2021) found that having diversity and inclusion policies in place within an organization has improved the representation of diverse people across the board, improved employee performance, addressed the social processes that arise when diversity exists, and created an environment within the organization that encourages the full inclusion of diverse people. Selin (2022) found that the approach to the principles of gender diversity implementation in the workplace by the Marriott group of companies played a considerable role in the retention of skilled employees and enhanced their performance level. Inclusion and recognition had an impact on the overall performance of the employees.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This objective examined the effect of gender diversity on employee performance in the County Government of Kitui, Kenya. The findings showed that the gender diversity initiatives, gender inclusion policies and gender identity had a significant relationship with employee performance. Gender inclusion policies include practices that create a feeling of being valued, respected, and provided with equal opportunities in the organization. Gender inclusion policies led to improved employee morale and satisfaction, increase innovation and employee creativity, and improved the organizational reputation.

The performance of employees was influenced significantly by the changes in gender initiatives and policies. The concludes that the correlation between gender diversity and employee performance was strong and significant. When men and women have equal opportunities for growth and a workplace free of gender bias and where there is fair and equal treatment, employees were more motivated to work hard, according to the research study. The results indicate that gender diversity significantly improves employee performance. As a result, companies that support equitable gender representation and adopt inclusive workplace policies can expect to be more productive, creative, and effective overall.

Findings from the research highlight the value of making gender diversity a top organizational priority. The need of hiring a diverse team to promote better performance is recommended to

organizations. Employees are more likely to stay committed to their jobs when they have equal opportunity for growth and advancement. Companies that support equitable gender representation and adopt inclusive workplace policies can expect to be more productive, creative, and effective overall.

Suggestions for Further Research

The primary goal of this research study was to examine the relationship between the gender diversity and employee performance in the County Government of Kitui in Kenya. More research on the effects of a diverse workforce on organizational success is necessary. Possible topics for future studies on the topic of diversity in the workplace include its impact on interpersonal relationships and communication, which might have repercussions on employee performance and the bottom line. These variables include gender, job, generational and socioeconomic diversity.

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