

Influence of Organizational Structure on Employee Performance at Bugisu Cooperative Union, Mbale

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the impact of Organizational structure on employee performance at Bugisu Cooperative Union (BCU), Uganda, which faces inefficiency, poor communication, and employee dissatisfaction, despite its historical role in coffee production. The study addresses the key questions regarding what the key features of the organizational structure at BCU are, how this structure influence employee performance, and what strategies can be implemented, in order to improve Organizational and employee performance in the Organization. Organizational structure, as defined in existing literature, involves authority distribution, task division, communication channels, and decision making processes that take place in the Organization. The study employs explanatory research method, by utilizing primary data from 80 employee surveys and semi-structured interview with 12 managers, to assess how BCU's hierarchical and centralized structure affects performance. Findings of the study revealed that BCU's rigid organizational framework limits employee responsiveness and communication, negatively impacting morale and productivity. Statistical analysis showed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.68$) between clear role definitions and productivity, while centralized decision-making negatively correlated ($r = -0.45$) with job satisfaction. Theoretical foundations, including Mintzberg's structural configuration theory, suggest that Organizational design significantly influences Organizational performance. Centralized decision-making, typically in hierarchical structures, restrict employee autonomy, while clearer role definitions improve productivity. Empirical studies further support that effective communication as well-defined structures promote collaboration, reduce stress, and improve performance. This study concludes that BCU's current structures impede performance and recommends decentralizing decision-making, enhancing communication, and clarifying roles to improve efficiency and job satisfaction. Aligning the structures with modern organizational needs will enable BCU to overcome operational inefficiencies that lead to a motivated workforce, improving both organizational performance and employee morale. These changes will transform BCU into a more responsive, satisfying and productive workforce.

KEYWORDS: Organizational Structure, Employee Performance, Bugisu Cooperative Union, Employee Engagement, Job Satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Eriksson & Ortega, (2024)'s definition of organizational structures is born from organizational design literature that clearly points out the fact that organizational structures are characterized as a group of individuals together with units within an Organization, sets of hierarchical relationships that are formally established, and systems that are designed for coordination and communication across the units. As emphasized by Iranmanesh et al., (2021:3), an organizational structure demonstrates how authority and accountability are allocated, as well as how work processes are carried out among employees. Gutterman, (2024:1) points out the fact that organizational structures include important components that include roles, responsibilities and scope of authority, relationships, and communications/ channels of reporting. Winkler & Kremser, (2024) identified four universal organizational problems: work allocation, task division, reward distribution, and information provision. The organizational structure establishes the final procedure of coordinating and forms of interaction that must be strictly adhered to, as well as how duties are assigned and who submits reports for whom (Gutterman, 2024).

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(Yang, 2023) further suggested that Organizational structures are critical elements that define how Organizations operate by defining roles, responsibilities and authority. They shape the work environment, through influencing of the interaction between employees and the management, and eventually affecting employee performance. As Ugoani, (2023) argued, Organizational structures serve as vital frameworks through which managers in organizations coordinate various activities, to optimize the collective skills and resources of organizations. By creating distinct roles, cutting down on duplication as improving coordination, a well-designed structure increases productivity. On the other hand, poorly thought out organizational structures can stifle creativity, obstruct communication, and as well lower employee morale. According to (Kaurola, 2024:15), organizational frameworks are key in change management, because they guarantee that task distribution, supervision, and coordination all support the goals of the Organization. Bugisu Cooperative Union (BCU), one of Uganda's oldest and most cooperative unions, is faced with several challenges regarding its operational efficiency and employee satisfaction. The organization has suffered from inefficiency, poor communication, and alienated staff despite its historical prominence in the Elgon region's coffee production industry. This study investigated the effect of BCU's Organizational structure on employee performance, and points out possible areas for development.

Background

Organizational structure is defined by Corchuelo Martínez-Azúa et al., (2025:8), as "the formal system of authority relationships and tasks that control and coordinate employee actions and behavior to achieve goals in organizations".

The design of this structure influences the division of work, decision making, and employee interaction. The Organizational structure at BCU has been evolving in a way that it is now able to accommodate its role in the coffee production industry, an economic driver that is key in Elgon Region, Uganda. At Bugisu Cooperative Union (BCU), the organizational structure has evolved to accommodate its role in the coffee production industry, a key economic driver in Uganda's Elgon region. However, despite its historical prominence, BCU has battled with inefficiency, poor communication, and dissatisfied employees. This study investigated how these structural problems affect BCU employees' performance, with a particular emphasis on the relationship among decision-making procedures, communication channels, and hierarchy.

Historical Perspective

BCU was established in 1951 and has since been a fundamental player in the cooperative movement in Uganda. Smallholder coffee growers have historically benefited from the cooperative union's assistance by having access to markets, resources, and training (Nakayiso & Andrew, 2023). But as time went on, internal management issues, external market forces, and leadership changes all had an impact on BCU's organizational structure. These changes have resulted in an organizational structure that might no longer support workers' effective performance. Despite its long history of economic contribution, BCU has had trouble changing its organizational structure to satisfy modern needs. These problems have shown up as low output, tense departmental communication, and decreased employee job satisfaction.

Theoretical Perspective The theoretical foundation of this study is drawn upon a series of concepts in the field of organizational theory, mainly those that are related to Organizational structure and performance. Mintzberg's structural configuration theory states that an organization's environment, objectives, and task type all have an impact. According to this notion, employee performance and resource management are directly impacted by the organizational structure. For example, a decentralized organization is able to promote more creativity but lead to confusion if roles and responsibilities are not clear, whereas a more central structure may result in inefficiencies by limiting decision-making to top management. In a similar vein, Martin et al., (2022) argues that improved coordination and communication can result in increased job satisfaction and productivity. Thus, the study's theoretical approach focuses on the ways in which different structural components like communication channels, decision-making procedures, and hierarchy affect worker performance and organizational results.

Conceptual Perspective

The concept of organizational structure embraces several key elements. These are authority, responsibility, hierarchy, and communication. Authority, as pointed out by Westin & Montgomerie, (2024) refers to the power granted to individuals to make decisions and direct the actions of others. Responsibility, according to Ahmad et al., (2021) involves the duties assigned to employees in relation to their roles within the organization. Hierarchy is the system of ranks and reporting relationships that dictate how information flows and decisions are made within the organization. According to Lazarević & Ružičić, (2023), communication in Organizations is considered to be central to all aspects of structure, as it governs how information is disseminated and how employees interact with each other and with management. According to Hajjiali et al., (2022), there is a dynamic relationship between organizational structure and employee performance. While inadequate structure usually affect performance by limiting collaboration, decreasing accountability, and causing confusion, an ideal balance of clarity, flexibility, and

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communication results in higher productivity (Omachi & Ajewumi, 2024). In addition to establishing an Organization's hierarchy, organizational structures have a big impact on how workers carry out their duties. Effective resource allocation, clearly defined roles, and a cooperative work atmosphere are all promoted by a well-structured company (Yang, 2023). Given BCU's difficulties, it is essential to comprehend how organizational structure and employee performance are related.

Contextual Perspective

BCU operates in a region marked by exercising agricultural dependence, specifically in Arabica coffee production, which is vital for the local economy. The cooperative union's influence as a key player in the coffee value chain means that its organizational structure commands serious implications not only for employees but also for farmers and the local communities at large. The context in which BCU operates is characterized by limited resources, stakeholder interests that are diverse, and an evolving market environment, further emphasizes the importance of a flexible yet well-defined organizational structure (Nadunga, 2023). Despite BCU's significance historically, the union has faced challenges including low employee morale, ineffective departmental communication, and a lack of job role clarity, all of which seem to lead to deficiencies in its organizational design (Nakayiso & Andrew, 2023). These challenges call for an examination of how BCU's organizational structure affects the performance of employees and what changes are supposed to be made to optimize both efficiency and job satisfaction.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the current organizational structure at BCU.
2. To assess the impact of this structure on employee performance.
3. To propose recommendations for improving organizational efficiency and employee productivity.

Research Questions

1. What are the key features of the organizational structure at BCU?
2. How does this structure influence employee performance?
3. What strategies can be implemented, in order to improve Organizational and employee performance?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The influence of organizational structure on employee performance is a significant area of study in organizational behaviour and management study literature. An organization's structure dictates how work is distributed, management, coordinated, all of which affect work productivity, job satisfaction, and overall Organizational performance (Darmawan, 2024). This literature review looks at important frameworks, concepts, and empirical studies that highlight the relationship between Organizational Structure and employee performance, particularly as it related to cooperative unions such as Bugisu Cooperative Union.

Theoretical Foundations of Organizational Structure and Performance

Mintzberg's structural configuration theory is one of the fundamental theories for comprehending the relationship between organizational structure and performance. In his work, Mintzberg divides organizations into five types: adhocracy, divisionalized form, professional bureaucracy, machine bureaucracy, and basic structure. Every arrangement has an impact on the allocation of authority, the distribution of tasks, and the framework of decision-making. For instance, decision-making is centralized and activities are largely standardized in machine bureaucracies, which are frequently seen in large, hierarchical corporations. High efficiency might result from this, but creativity and flexibility may be constrained. Adhocracy, on the other hand, encourages flexibility and creativity but may have trouble sustaining efficiency and coordination due to its decentralized decision-making and innovation-driven settings (Jeong et al., 2024). Mintzberg's theory puts emphasis on how crucial it is to match the organizational structure to the type of work being done and the setting in which the business works. By promoting collaboration, distinct role definition, and efficient communication, the right structure helps Organizations to maximize performance. For cooperative unions like BCU, which function in intricate, multidimensional settings where efficiency and adaptability are necessary, this realization is particularly pertinent.

Organizational Structure and Employee Performance

Various empirical studies have examined the connection between employee performance and organizational structure. As stated in Jerab, (2023:3), "A well-defined structure facilitates the flow of information vertically and horizontally. This enables decision-makers to access relevant data and insights necessary for making informed decisions". This increases accountability, and makes job tasks more clear all of which lead to better employee performance. Employees in a structured workplace are aware of their roles and responsibilities, who they report to, and how their work fits into the overall objectives of the company. Üngüren & Arslan, (2021) points out the fact that role ambiguity, which is frequently linked to stress among employees in the organization, low

productivity, and job discontent, is lessened by this clarity, with employees being more likely to complete tasks effectively.

Valeri, (2021) however, also draws attention to the possible drawbacks of extremely rigid or hierarchical arrangements. Decision-making in these kinds of institutions is frequently centralized, which can impede employee autonomy and slow down reaction times (Altamimi et al., 2023). If workers believe their duties are too confined or their decision-making power is diminished, they may eventually lose interest in or motivation for their work. Performance and job satisfaction may suffer as a result, especially in settings that demand creativity and innovation. Therefore, it's important to strike a balance between giving workers structure and letting them be creative and adaptable.

Communication and Decision-Making Processes

One important component of organizational structure that affects worker performance is communication. Iranmanesh et al., (2021) claim that organizational structure determines the routes of information flow, which has an impact on how well workers cooperate and plan their tasks. (Nasrin & Isik, 2021) emphasizes that clear lines of communication can improve information sharing and teamwork, particularly in hierarchical institutions. Employee performance is hampered by misunderstandings and inefficiencies that result from inadequate communication. If workers feel left out of key decision making processes, they may become frustrated and less motivated (Suknunan & Bhana, 2022).

An Organizational structure has an impact on efficient decision making procedures in an Organization (Djurayeva, 2024). Decision-making is usually focused at the top in more central companies, which can speed procedures but also restrict the input of lower-level staff. Decentralized systems, on the other hand, provide greater participation in decision-making at different levels, which may boost worker satisfaction and results ownership (Ugoani, 2023). However, excessive decentralization causes coordination issues since teams or departments may pursue distinct objectives without enough collaboration. To maximize productivity and employee engagement, the structure must support a balance between decentralized decision-making and centralized control.

Impact of Organizational Design on Cooperative Unions

Huang et al., (2021) investigated the relationship between union commitment and job performance in China, emphasizing the moderating influence of affective commitment and the mediation role of employee involvement. Union membership, employee participation, and job performance were all positively correlated, according to data collected from 596 union members in 33 unionized businesses in China's Pearl River Delta. Furthermore, affective commitment was found to improve the mediation impact of employee engagement on job performance as well as the relationship between union commitment and employee participation.

Employee performance is directly impacted by the organizational structure's design in cooperative unions like Bugisu Cooperative Union. Cooperative unions usually work in the agriculture industry, where their responsibilities include managing members, coordinating logistics, maintaining quality control, and satisfying consumer needs. According to Ugoani, (2023), the organizational structure of cooperative unions is especially crucial since it facilitates coordination across many departments, including supply chain management, marketing, and finance. Better employee performance and increased productivity result from each unit's ability to function effectively and in line with the union's overarching objectives thanks to a well-designed structure.

The Role of Hierarchy in Employee Motivation and Performance

Within a business, hierarchy has a big impact on how employees behave and perform. Koc et al., (2024) asserted that by precisely defining roles and responsibilities, a hierarchical organization offers structure and clarity. Employee motivation and performance may increase as a result of improved responsibility and decreased ambiguity (Ranjan, 2024). But as Chmeit, (2024) also notes, hierarchies occasionally result in overbearing management and little room for employee liberty. Employee performance and job satisfaction may suffer if they believe that hierarchical standards are placing undue restrictions on their roles.

The notion that hierarchical systems, although they offer clarity, can also impair performance if they restrict communication and teamwork is further supported by research by (Yang, 2023). Decisions taken without employee input can sometimes make workers feel alienated or disempowered, which lowers morale and performance. This implies that companies need to strike a balance between upholding distinct lines of authority and creating an atmosphere that promotes employee involvement and innovation.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized the exploratory research design, in order to understand the influence of Organizational structure on employee performance at Bugisu Cooperative Union. This design aimed to create hypotheses regarding the connections between two or more variables. Examining pertinent literature was critical for this study. Secondary

data was collected from published sources. Books and other significant materials, as well as scholarly, public, and private publications, could provide such secondary data. The meanings and significance of the interactions between the variables that have been identified for inquiry are clarified by the review of earlier publications (Ugoani, 2023).

Data Collection Methods

The study utilized both Primary and Secondary data collection methods.

Primary Data

To collect primary data Surveys were done, in form of structured questionnaires that were administered to 80 employees across the various departments in the Organization, to capture quantitative data on their perception of organizational structure and its impact on performance.

Semi structured Interview were carried out with 12 senior managers, to acquire a better understanding of the structural challenges and their views on employee performance.

Secondary Data

Secondary data for this study was collected from archival records, organizational charts, and previous reports that were reviewed to better understand the BCU's structural framework.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data for this study were analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS), to identify patterns and correlations.

Quantitative data were analyzed in a thematic way, through allowing the researchers to identify recurring themes related to the Organizational structure and employee performance.

Sampling

Stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure that the employees from various departments were well represented in the sample that was selected. The total sample size consisted of 90 participants, including both employees and managers.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The study's findings revealed key features in its organizational structure, which are characterized by multiple layers of management.

First of all, BCU has a conventional hierarchical organization with various levels of management. This arrangement establishes a distinct chain of command, with top-level leadership holding final say and each department being supervised by a manager who answers to upper management. Within the organization, this hierarchical structure guarantees distinct powers and accountability.

Secondly, a key component of BCU's organizational design is the central decision making, with top management being the key decision makers. Because they must wait for decisions or permissions from supervisors before acting, employees at a lower level have got poor response times to operational concerns, as a result of the centralization. Moreover, BCU maintains strict channels of communication that adhere to established procedures. This rigidity frequently prevents information from freely flowing between departments, which delays the distribution of knowledge and makes it more difficult for units to collaborate effectively.

The organizational structure of BCU has both positive and negative impacts on employee performance. Positively, the hierarchical structure's inherent explicit role definitions enhance task completion and accountability. Workers are well-informed about their roles and reporting structures, which eliminates misunderstandings and guarantees efficient job management. Better task management and performance monitoring are made possible by the hierarchical supervision structure, which guarantees that every employee has a designated superior who monitors their work. However, there are also a number of drawbacks. Because lower-level personnel frequently encounter delays in obtaining appropriate approvals or instructions, BCU's centralized decision-making process results in tardy reactions to operational concerns. Their overall efficiency suffers as a result of their inability to act swiftly on pressing issues due to their delayed decision-making.

Misunderstandings and misalignments are worsened by inadequate departmental communication. Workers complained about the lack of open communication and the delayed information flow between several departments, which hinders teamwork and assignment completion on time. Additionally, employees feel disconnected and restricted in terms of innovation because of the centralized structure's limited autonomy in decision-making. They feel less in control of their work and are less satisfied with their jobs as a result of not participating in decision-making.

Quantitative analysis of the organizational structure's impact on employee performance provided important statistical findings. A strong positive correlation of $r = 0.68$ was found between clear role definitions and employee productivity, which indicated that well-defined roles significantly facilitated task efficiency and overall employee performance output.

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Conversely, a significant negative correlation of $r = -0.45$ was observed between centralized decision-making and employee satisfaction at BCU, suggesting that the more centralized decision-making is, the lower the job satisfaction among the employees. This highlights that employees are likely to feel more disengaged and less satisfied with their work environment when decisions are made solely at the higher levels of the organization, as supported by earlier studies from Afrahi et al., (2022), Saks et al., (2022) and Pathan, (2023) who emphasized that it was essential for businesses to foster an environment where employees are happy in their jobs. The idea of job satisfaction provides a useful explanation of the relationship between company culture and employee commitment. Because job satisfaction affects how employees view their workplace, it acts as a mediator in the interaction between organizational culture and employee commitment. Employee commitment can be increased by creating an atmosphere that supports job satisfaction through a positive corporate culture. On the other hand, a bad corporate culture can result in job discontent, which lowers employee dedication. Therefore, for Organizations considering to identify and address the fundamental elements that influence employee commitment, it is imperative to comprehend the mediating function of work satisfaction in the relationship between organizational culture and employee commitment.

These results point out the importance of finding a balance between providing clear organizational structures and offering employees more autonomy, while also improving communication channels to improve both employee performance and overall organizational effectiveness at BCU.

V. DISCUSSIONS AND SUMMARY

The findings of this study strongly align with the principles outlined in contingency theory, which asserts that an organization's structure is supposed to be designed to fit its external environment and internal needs. In the case of Bugisu Cooperative Union (BCU) in Elgon Region, Uganda, the existing hierarchical structure gives a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, which are seen to be beneficial for maintaining control and ensuring accountability within an Organization. However, this structure also brings about notable drawbacks, particularly in its ability to facilitate flexibility, encourage innovation, and provide employees with a sense of autonomy. The rigid decision-making processes and centralized authority within BCU create barriers that limit responsiveness to operational challenges and stifle creative problem-solving. These findings emphasize the need for BCU to re-assess its organizational structure, in order to better align with the dynamic nature of the cooperative sector.

The study's results are consistent with broader global trends, which imply that more cooperation, creativity, and adaptability are typically fostered by organizational structures that have got fewer levels of hierarchy. Decentralized decision-making increases employee engagement by granting people at lower levels of the company more authority over their work and the decisions that impact their responsibilities, as research from a variety of industries has repeatedly shown. This is supported by Bhanje, (2023), who emphasized that employees are empowered to make prompt judgments when delegating decision making authority, which cuts down on delays and increases operational effectiveness. Furthermore, giving workers greater freedom, as highlighted by Harjanto et al., (2023), improves their job happiness, which is closely related to higher levels of loyalty and productivity inside the company.

The idea that decentralization is essential to raising employee satisfaction and performance is supported by lessons learned from previous cooperative unions. Employees in cooperatives with decentralized structures, for example, report feeling more involved and respected, which raises motivation and engagement levels, according to multiple studies. Since workers are more inclined to offer ideas when they believe their contributions will result in significant change, these unions have also seen increases in innovation.

To improve BCU's organizational outcomes, it is recommended that the union consider reducing its hierarchical layers and empowering employees with greater decision-making authority. Additionally, enhancing communication channels to ensure that information flows more freely across departments would help to reduce misunderstandings and improve coordination. Ultimately, BCU's organizational structure should prioritize flexibility and employee engagement, which will enable the union to adapt more effectively to changing market conditions and enhance its overall performance.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study reveals that BCU's organization structure presents key barriers to optimal employee performance, even when it provides clarity and accountability. The organization's capacity to promptly adjust to evolving situations is hindered by the hierarchical structure and centralized decision-making, which also create an atmosphere that inhibits innovation and creativity. This is stated by Lazarević & Ružičić, (2023:39), who emphasized that "influence can be positive or negative depending on the dimensions of the organizational structure and the values promoted by the organizational culture".

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Workers frequently face communication difficulties and decision-making delays, which can cause annoyance and disengagement. The structure's rigidity prevents the flexibility required for increased productivity and employee happiness, even though there are clear role definitions and efficient supervision.

Delays in decision-making and communication are usual among employees, which can lead to frustration and disengagement. Although there are clear role definitions and effective supervision, the rigidity of the structure hinders the flexibility needed for greater production and employee satisfaction.

Recommendations

To address these issues and improve both organizational performance and employee satisfaction, several key recommendations are made:

1. **Enhance Communication:** One of the primary issues identified was the lack of open communication channels within the BCU as an organization. Establishing clear, open lines of communication across all levels of the organization is desired. This is best achieved through implementation of regular feedback sessions, promoting informal communication forums, and utilizing digital tools to enable the flow of information in the Organization. Open communication will help decrease on the misunderstandings, improve coordination, and ensure that all employees are aligned with the organization's goals.
2. **Decentralize Decision-Making:** Centralized decision-making was found to be a major barrier to quick problem-solving and innovation, as supported by (Altamimi et al., 2023). Giving departmental managers more decision-making ability will enable them to respond to operational difficulties more quickly. Decisions can be made closer to the point of action thanks to decentralization, which improves overall operational efficiency, fosters creativity, and boosts the organization's capacity to quickly adjust to changing conditions.
3. **Promote Employee Engagement:** Involving employees in decision-making processes is key to improving morale and fostering creativity, as supported by (Ghani & Taylor, 2023). When employees feel that their input is appreciated, they are more likely to take ownership of their work and contribute new ideas to the Organization. Engaging employees in regular brainstorming sessions, decision-making meetings, and encouraging them to propose solutions to operational challenges can boost their sense of empowerment and job satisfaction.
4. **Periodic Reviews:** To ensure that BCU's organizational structure remains effective and responsive to changes in the industry, it is essential to conduct regular reviews, as earlier suggested by (Iranmanesh et al., 2021). These reviews are supposed to assess whether the structure continues to meet the organization's operational needs and adapts to the evolving demands of the cooperative sector. By regularly evaluating the structure, BCU will be able to identify areas for improvement and ensure that it remains competitive and efficient in the long term.

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