

Effect of Occupational Transfers on Employee Engagement in Private Universities in Western Kenya

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Abstract:- According to Makori, M. & Kariuki, N., (2015), a study was conducted in Presbyterian University of East Africa (PUEA) by the HR Office in 2014 and disclosed that about 50% of employees in Kenyan institutions of Higher Learning merely come to work to do what is needed of them. The study showed that 47% of workers came to work and ended up using most of their time on social websites during work hours. Hence workforce turnover was registered at 43%. The major cause of these situations is not known. Scholars have given many suggestions that some Occupational changes in private universities are linked with digitalization, how information is shared, relocation of workers, change in task objectives and production costs. Nevertheless, it is not known whether these changes have any significant effect on employee engagement in Kenyan private universities. This study therefore was particularly concerned with the Effect of Occupational Transfers on Employee Engagement in Private Universities in Western Kenya. The conclusions of this study might be very useful to many stakeholders involved in the management of Private universities in Kenya. The study was based on the Job Characteristics theory. Correlational research design was used. Target population was 1440 workers of four selected Private Universities. Stratified random sampling techniques were employed. The sample of 313 workers from different sections was used. Questionnaires were given to Respondents to complete for the purpose of data collection. Questionnaire were developed using items from literature reviews. SPSS and Excel tools were used during the data analysis process. Data was presented using charts and Frequency tables. From the results, conclusions and recommendations were made. A pilot study was carried out with 10 respondents from Uzima University to assess the validity of the research instruments. The 10 respondents were not involved in the main study. The results revealed that occupational transfers had a negative effect ($\beta = -.541$, $p < .05$) and accounted for 29.3% variance in employee engagement ($R^2 = .293$, $p < .05$). It was concluded that Occupational Transfers have a significant

effect on employee engagement. The study suggested that private universities in western Kenya should communicate to their employees before they are transferred.

Keywords:- Occupational Transfers, Employee Engagement.

I. INTRODUCTION

➤ Occupational Transfers

In many businesses, occupational transfers do happen. Suzuki, a Kobe University organizational behavioral specialist provided evidence for this, he tracked the differences in the dynamics between the ancient and modern Occupations for 20 years. He also looked at how the relationships between Japanese corporations and labor have changed. He concluded that since the end of World War II, firms in Japan have shifted from the concept of lifetime employment, which became deeply ingrained during the postwar economic boom. This has resulted in a significant cultural shift in the country's occupational landscape (Katol & Suzuki, 2006).

Workers worry that they may lose their employment or be moved to other positions which might lead to stress at work, including anxiety, tension, and wrath. On the other hand, Changing careers can force workers to think in fresh and interesting ways. One advantage of creative thinking within the corporation is the generation of several inventions and concepts that can be utilized to maintain the business dynamic, fascinating, and profitability. (Kotler, 1999). A 2014 Oxford Economics Workforce 2020 study found that during periods of significant occupational shifts, business organizations in South Africa face challenges in managing talent, developing leadership, comprehending people, and promoting learning. The Systems Applications and Products (SAP) group commissioned the study, which found that occupational transfers were the most popular occupational trend in South Africa (59%), which was followed by the entry of so-called millennial into the workforce (54%), and the internationalization of the workforce (43%) (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

Karanja (2015) argue that the digital age has brought both great possibilities and difficulties to a number of Kenyan enterprises. Businesses perceive that monitoring operations has become a challenge because of the swift change in occupational fields. She also noted that, at 61%, occupational transfers have been the most common type of occupational shift, forcing firms to implement late tactics in order to avoid fierce competition. Karanja came to the conclusion that changes in a worker's occupation might affect every facet of the business's operations. Most of these adjustments are driven by the need to adapt to new possibilities or problems brought about by the atmosphere of the organization. However, Karanja's research on the impact of occupational shifts on performance was too wide to establish a connection between similar changes—for example, occupational transfers and employee engagement—and other factors.

➤ *Higher Education in Kenya*

In Kenya, there are essentially two categories of universities: private and public. Public universities are owned and supported by the state. Private persons or organizations, some of which are religious, are in charge of private universities. Tuition fees and sponsorship provide the lion's share of the organization's revenue. Like all other universities, private universities in Kenya function in an environment that is dynamic and competitive. To sustain efficiency, they have to give up a lot of their long-standing customs in favor of unproven future routes (Okenda, Thuo, & Kithinji, 2017). Adjustments in private universities are mostly focused on organizational communication, technological advances, behavioral changes, and strategic planning. The implementation of novel approaches differs throughout universities and could impact real output. The real cause for the disparity in university rankings, where some continue to be ranked poorly while others are ranked highly, is still a mystery (Okenda, Thuo, & Kithinji, 2017)

The employment of new technologies, a change in advertising approaches, and the hiring of exceptionally qualified individuals are the outcomes of Kenya's higher education transition (Mathooko, 2013). Higher education (HE) is evolving due to several main issues, according to Boston (2000): rising expenses, a growing focus on college ratings, changing student demographics, and increased parental concern about educational quality. To remain competitive in a global marketplace, universities have tried to adopt the following strategies: superior quality compared to rival institutions, cutting-edge technology, effective communication techniques, and reorganizing their staff in terms of abilities, knowledge, and talent management (Watson, 1996).

While Mathooko (2013), Boston (2000), and Watson (1996) made an effort to clarify some of the developments in higher education, as well as the variables that led to these changes and subsequent modalities, they were unable to explain the connections between these changes in the

workplace, such as workforce reorganization, and employee engagement in higher education. Additionally, the authors have not indicated what field of study or applicability of their recommendations, nor have they demonstrated how these similar obstacles and intervening strategies may be recognized and established independently at either public or private higher education institutions. Therefore, the goal of the research was to determine whether occupational transfers have any apparent effect on employee engagement in Kenya's private universities.

In their study "Effect of Occupational Changes on Performance in Kenyan Private Universities," Rael, Dinah, and Kipkebut (2019) found that universities have implemented a number of novel tactics to counteract occupational changes, such as occupational transfers, that affect their real efficiency. The authors, nevertheless, could not understand as to why Kenyan colleges have differing ratings, with some being ranked well and others poorly. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to ascertain if occupational transfers affect employee engagement at Kenyan private institutions.

➤ *Employee Engagement*

Employee views, optimistic outlook, self-perception, and self-assurance in the company are just a few of the elements that make up employee engagement. It is also affected by the company's mission goals, predetermined course, daily decisions, and staff appreciation (Saxena, 2012). Employee job satisfaction, pride in one's work, attitude toward one's work, and occupational impacts are all components of an engaged workforce. Workers take joy in their work when they approach it with enthusiasm and accountability. An employee's response to a manager who stands by them and defends their actions or productivity is increased satisfaction, which has a direct and beneficial impact on employee engagement (Linz & Huddleston, 2006). Adding to this, Shuck et al. (2010) contend that employee engagement literature needs to start paying much more attention to the occupational context in order to properly comprehend how and why employee engagement is not fulfilled in private colleges.

These writers have attempted to provide evidence to support their explanation of the poor employee engagement observed in Kenyan private universities, but they have not addressed the root causes of these issues or whether occupational transfers in the workplace could be a factor in the low engagement of the workforce. However, the HRO report in the PUEA does not identify or even mention the causative factors that result in these manifestations of low employee engagement in higher learning institutions. Instead, it speculates extensively about the implications of low employee engagement for organizations and individual workers. This study aimed to assess the effect of Occupational transfers on employee engagement in Kenya's private universities, in light of these observations and gaps.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

Private universities in Kenya are currently experiencing substantial employee turnover, subpar work performance, inadequate service standards, and a dynamic workplace marked by frequent occupational changes. The main obstacles are figuring out what creates these situations and how to draw in and keep talented, committed employees. Several studies have been conducted to assess the level of staff engagement in Kenya's private universities. Most of the researches have repeatedly shown that despite the high standards that different stakeholders have put in place, a common problem is low staff satisfaction. Moreover, there is a lack of proficiency in the administration of student relations, public involvement, and consumer relations within Kenyan private Universities. However, the causes of these occurrences are unknown, which is why this study was conducted. On the other hand, studies have indicated that transfer activities may be one of the occupational changes in private higher education institutions; nevertheless, it is unknown if these changes have any effect on employee engagement, which is why this study was conducted.

➤ *Objective of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the effect of occupational transfers on employee engagement in private universities in western Kenya.

The study was guided by this hypothesis:

H₀₁: There is no significant Effect of Occupational Transfers on Employee Engagement in private universities in western Kenya.

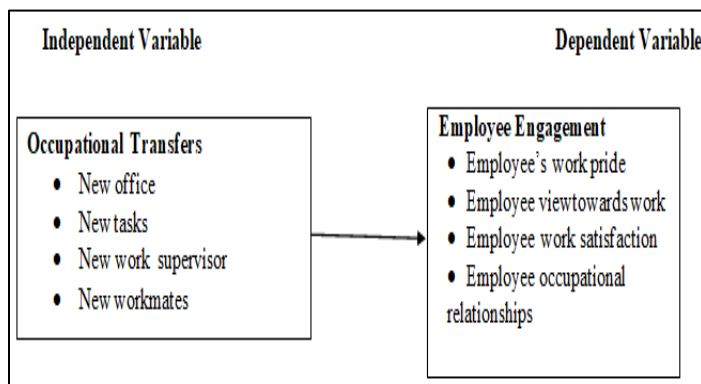


Fig 1 Conceptual Framework

II. THEORITICAL REVIEW

➤ *Job Characteristics Theory*

Under the work characteristics theory that was created by Hackman and Oldham in 1975, the task itself is considered to be crucial to employee engagement. The job characteristic model states that intrinsically motivated features are fostered by the occupational setting, which leads to job satisfaction. The factors of task identification, autonomy, feedback, and

diversity of skills all impact three psychological states. Because of this, a range of possible outcomes, including job satisfaction, absenteeism, and occupational engagement, is influenced by the three psychological states. (Hackman, 1975). Three psychological states—meaningfulness of work, responsibility, and awareness of outcomes—are linked to high occupational motivation according to Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics motivation theory. From an organizational perspective, it is anticipated that enhancing the specifics of essential job responsibilities will lead to increased occupational satisfaction and employee engagement (Hackman, 1975).

Three crucial psychological states, according to Hackman (1975), are in charge of many fruitful personal and professional outcomes. They are listed in the following order:

• *The Subsequent are Crucial Attributes of the Job:*

The degree to which a job demands an employee to execute a range of tasks and develop a range of competencies is referred to as skill variety. Employees may find greater purpose in work demanding a broad range of skills and abilities than in tasks that are straightforward and routine.

• *Task Identity:*

The degree to which job holders must locate and finish a task with a defined outcome; when workers are accountable for all stages of the process instead of just a few, their work takes on greater significance for them

• *Task Importance:*

How much a task impacts other people's lives. There may be an impact on the immediate organization or the surroundings. When their profession considerably improves people's physical or mental health, employees feel that their work is more meaningful than if it has minimal effect to anyone else.

• *Autonomy:*

The degree to which an employee has a great deal of latitude, self-governance, and discretion in choosing how to set up their work and fulfill their duties. In professions where employees have a high degree of autonomy, their work outcomes are decided by their own initiative, efforts, and decisions rather than by directives from management or a task process manual. Employees feel more responsible for both professional success and failure when this occurs.

• *Feedback:*

The degree of comprehension of the result by the staff member. This data regarding how well he or she performs their work is precise, comprehensive, and useful. When employees obtain clear, actionable information on their work performance, they are better able to comprehend the overall effects of their work activities and what precise measures (if any) they need to take to increase their productivity.

- *Experienced Meaningfulness of Work:*

This is the degree to which an employee believes their work has intrinsic value and can articulate that value to others and/or the outside world. Experienced Responsibility for Exercise Outcomes: The extent to which a worker feels responsible and in charge of their exercise outcomes; the extent to which a worker is conscious of their performance in connection to the results of their work activities. The original theory's personal and professional outcomes, which were predicated on earlier research, included performance quality, absenteeism and turnover, internal work motivation, and job satisfaction—all of which are important elements of employee engagement. Thus, this theory will aid in our comprehension of the relationship between the two variables as well as whether or not changes at the occupational level have an impact on the inherent characteristics of employee engagement.

Compared to Herzberg's theory, the job characteristic model is backed by more empirical data. Critics point out that many studies that employ this model ignore important psychological states entirely, focusing only on the direct effects of fundamental job aspects on personal and professional outcomes (Behnson, 2010). This has led to criticism of the approach. This hypothesis will therefore be relevant to the current study.

III. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

In the contemporary world, the quality of occupational transfers is a constant source of concern for any institution or organization, especially when it comes to putting transfer rules into place that guarantee staff members' continued engagement to meet the objectives. Lee (2011) defines a transfer as a lateral shift as the moving of people from one position to another without a major alteration in the responsibilities, duties, skills needed, or pay.

According to Black's (2004) study, which examined the relationship between occupational transfers, work motivation, and employee performance, an employee may find it challenging to adjust to a new workplace, role, and supervisor when they are transferred to a new work office. The study also showed that, even in cases where a transfer is beneficial, an employee may find it challenging to get to know a new supervisor when they are assigned to a different department or location. The study finds that while some workers find the unknown unsettling, others find it thrilling. It may be difficult for them to adjust and function in the new setting, which lowers satisfaction. Since it sought to explain the relationship between occupational transfers, work motivation, and employee performance even in cases where the transfers are good, this study was necessary.

Schalts (2010) claims that an employee's productivity may drop when transferred to a new work environment until he has adjusted to the new location. Moving an employee to a new office building, changing offices, or simply renovating an office space can have the same effect on employees as moving to a new residence does on a family. The study's findings also indicate that employees may experience stress and anxiety when taking on new positions. Workers could also be hesitant to move from their previous job and make minimal contributions to their new section. Additionally, the survey found that employees view new jobs as formalities and procedures, which makes them reticent to share their thoughts in a new team or open up to new colleagues. The survey also found that although most workers feel highly at ease working with people they have known for a long time, they find it very difficult to get used to new coworkers, which lowers their engagement.

Harrison (2000) however, found that some firms see transfers as a great way to boost morale and encourage employee engagement in his paper on the Effect of Transfer and Incentive on Employee Performance. The study found that while moving can occasionally be difficult, it doesn't have to be chaotic; instead, it can result in a motivated, invigorated, and reenergized workforce that is ready to contribute to the company's success. According to the report, managers should consult with staff members ahead of time to find out their opinions before relocating an office. Their engagement will rise as a result of this, helping them get ready for a change. According to the study's findings, employee engagement and productivity both decline when transfers are made insufficiently or incorrectly, but the contrary is also right.

Behnson (2010) divides occupational transfer issues into two categories: issues that are connected to the workplace and issues that are not. Transitioning to a new workplace and accepting additional responsibilities are examples of work-related concerns; decisions on relocation, social and emotional strain, and other matters fall under the category of non-work-related concerns. The study also notes that poor performance, resistance, and poor quality of work can arise from unintentional occupational transfers. The study did not however demonstrate a relationship between occupational transfers and low employee engagement, hence leading to this study.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The use of questionnaires intended to elicit respondents' opinions and views on the issues affecting the study helped to ensure that accurate data was collected. (Orwaru, 2014). The study's target population was the staff members of four private universities in the Western Kenya region. The universities included: University of Eastern Africa, Baraton in Nandi County, Kenya Highlands University in Kericho County, Great Lakes university of Kisumu in Kisumu County and

Uzima University in Kisumu County. It comprised 140 heads of departments, 230 supervisors and 1070 operational workers; both teaching and non-teaching staff (see table 3.1). In terms of gender, age, ethnicity, work experience, and educational backgrounds, the target audience was diverse.

Because respondents in this study came from different employment cadres, a stratified sampling technique was used to ensure that the samples drawn from every stratum were fairly represented in the overall sample and that their numbers in the targeted population as a whole remained proportionate was crucial. By applying the stratified sampling technique, the researcher was able to reduce the possibility of biases during the sample selection process from the target population (Kothari, 2009). The researcher used Yamane’s formula (cited in Njugi & Muna 2021) as follow:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where N is the size of the population, e is the margin of error, and n is the sample size (0.05)

$$n = 1440 / (1 + 1440(0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 313$$

Thus, a sample of 313 was picked from a population of 1440workers (See Table 2)

The study employed a questionnaire on a Likert scale as the tool for primary data collection. This was directed by the goals of the research. Because the respondents were already aware with the parameters being studied, it was thought suitable to use a self-administered questionnaire to collect data for this study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Respondents from a range of departments were given questionnaires to complete in order to gather their opinions on the impact of occupational transfers on employee engagement in private universities in Western Kenya. The researcher gave them time to finish filling the questionnaires before gathering them. The instruments were assessed for validity by experts with backgrounds in higher education and HR management. To calculate the surveys' coefficient of internal consistency, the researchers used the split-half method. As a result, the dependability was determined to be 0.78 which was suitable for data collecting.

Data analysis was done through regression model Adopted from Fairchild & Mackinon (2009) & Whisman and McClelland (2005)

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where; Y = Employee engagement in private universities

β_0 = The constant or coefficient of intercept.

X_1 = Occupational Transfers.

ϵ = Error term

β_1 = Corresponding coefficients for the respective in dependent variables.

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

➤ Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic features of the respondents were investigated before the actual process. These included the gender, educational attainments, and employment experience of the respondents. The results are displayed as **Table 1** illustrates

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	128	42.8
Male	171	57.2
Total	299	100.0
Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
Diploma	34	11.4
Degrees	62	20.7
PHDs	124	41.5
Masters	79	26.4
Total	299	100.0
Occupation	Frequency	Percent
HODs	30	10
Supervisors	48	16.1
Operational Workers	221	73.9
Total	299	100.0
Work experience in years	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	71	23.7
6-10 years	51	17.1
11-15 years	123	41.1
over 15 years	54	18.1
Total	299	100.0

The results indicates that a big percentage of the respondents were male, 171(57.2%) while the smaller percentage were female respondents 128(42.8%). The findings also indicates that most of the respondents, 124(41.5%) had PhDs followed by 79(26.4%) who had Master’s Degrees, 62(20.7%) with bachelor’s degrees and lastly 34(11.4%) who

are diploma holders. Moreover, the findings also indicates that many of the respondents, 221(73.1%) belong to operational level work followed by 48(16.1%) who are supervisors then 30(10%) were HODs. These results showed a true representation of higher Education workforce where the majority have PHDs. The study's demographic features were crucial because they gave insight into the types of respondents who took part. For example, the presence of respondents with advanced degrees, such a PHD, suggests that the opinions expressed came from people who knew more about universities. Experience also demonstrates that the respondents have knowledge of university affairs, making them qualified to offer trustworthy information.

➤ *Findings on the Effect of Occupational Transfers on Employee Engagement*

The study sought to establish the effect of occupational transfers on employee engagement in private Universities in western Kenya region. Hence, respondents on both variables gave data which was collected and later correlated.

The study sought views from the respondents considering different factors related to occupational transfers. The statements were generated on a scale of 1-4, showing the extent to which they agreed with each statement: where: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree and 4= strongly agree. The findings are presented as shown in Table 4.7 that follows.

Table 2 Occupational Transfers Practices

Statement	1	2	3	4	M	STD
Do you agree or disagree that new supervision leads to low employee engagement in private universities in western Kenya?	14(4.7)	63(21.1)	157(52.5)	65(21.7)	2.9	.78
Do you agree or disagree that moving employees to new work offices reduces their engagement in private universities in western Kenya?	6(2)	93(31.1)	168(56.2)	32(10.7)	2.8	.66
Do you agree or disagree that shifting employees to new roles decreases their engagement in private universities in western Kenya?	5(1.7)	109(36.5)	137(45.8)	48(16.1)	2.8	.73
Do you agree or disagree that working with new and unfamiliar workmates reduces employee engagement in private universities in western Kenya?	26(8.7)	72(24.1)	147(49.2)	54(18.1)	2.8	.85

Source, (Field Survey, 2022)

Key-1= strongly disagree (SD), 2= disagree (D), 3= agree (A) and 4= strongly agree (SA), M-Mean, STD-Standard deviation

The findings showed that 157(52.5%) of the respondents agree that new work supervision can leads to low employee engagement in private universities in western Kenya, which also had a high rating (M=2.9, SD=.78). Additionally, relocating employees to new work offices lowers their engagement in private universities in western Kenya as indicated by majority of the respondents, 168(56.2%) of the respondents who were in agreement, also with a high rating (M=2.8, SD=.66). Further analysis showed that shifting employees to new tasks decreases their engagement in private universities in western Kenya as showed by 137(45.8%) of the respondents and a high mean and low standard deviation (M=2.8, SD=.73). The low means indicate that occupational transfer practices are exercised to a small magnitude while the small standard deviations shows that the respondents' views had small variations thus highly agreed. Lastly, the findings as showed by many of the respondents, 147(49.2%) indicate that working with unfamiliar workmates lowers employee engagement in private universities in western Kenya region

(M=2.8, SD=.85). Most of workers who participated in the study showed that new work supervision led to low employee engagement. They also indicated that transferring employees to new tasks and working with unfamiliar workmates lowered their engagements.

➤ *Hypothesis Testing for Objective 2: Effect between Transfers of Employees and their Morale*

Determining the effect of occupational transfers on employee engagement was the objective of this study. "There is no significant effect between occupational transfers and employee engagement in private universities in western Kenya," was the null hypothesis of this study. Both basic linear regression models and Pearson product moment correlation were used to test this.

Table 3 presents additional data using a simple linear regression model to determine whether occupational transfers have an effect on employees' engagement.

Table 3 Effect between Occupational Transfers and their Morale

Model Summary										
Model	R	R Square		Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		df1	df2	Sig. F Change
						R Square Change	F Change			
1	.541 ^a	.293		.291	.42651	.293	123.126	1	297	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), transfer										
Coefficients ^a										
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.		
		B	Std. Error		Beta					
1	(Constant)	1.339	.137				9.810	.000		
	transfer	.528	.048		-.541		11.096	.000		
a. Dependent Variable: employee engagement										

Table 3 presents evidence indicating that occupational transfers have a significant and negative effect on employees' engagement, in accordance with the correlation coefficient ($\beta = -.541, p < .05$). Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .291, P < .05$) shows that occupational transfers explain for 29.1% variance in their engagement. It is implied by this that moving personnel around affects their engagement. In light of these results, the alternative hypothesis—which holds that occupational transfers significantly affect employees' engagement and cause it to decline—was accepted in place of the null hypothesis. These results agree with the findings of a study conducted by Black (2004) on the relationship between occupational transfers and employee performance, which revealed that an employee may experience adjustment issues upon moving to a new occupational setting due to the presence of a new supervisor, office, roles, and coworkers. The results also support those of Schalts (2010), who found that relocating an employee to a new office building, switching offices, or even just remodeling an office space can affect workers in the same way that relocating a family to a new home does. Until an employee adjusts to his new work environment, his productivity may decline. Thus, it can be said that occupational transfers negatively affect employee engagement.

VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study's goal was to determine the relationship between occupational transfers and employee engagement in western Kenya's private universities. The results showed a substantial negative association between occupational transfers and employee engagement. The results showed that occupational transfers had a negative and significant effect on employee engagement using a simple linear regression model. It appears from this that moving staff around affects their engagement.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The study's goal was to determine the relationship between occupational transfers and employee engagement in private universities. Occupational transfers may be significant for a variety of reasons, and it would be advantageous if they were done voluntarily or at their leisure. On the other hand, if a transfer is made with force, the impacted workers eventually lose motivation to work. Generally, if an occupational transfer is voluntary, employees' engagement will rise; if it is forced, however, engagement may fall. Therefore, it can be said that changes in their line of work have a big impact on their engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While occupational transfers are crucial for the performance of western Kenyan private colleges, the current study suggests that occupational transfers—where they can be assigned various jobs to boost morale at work—should receive greater attention.

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