

Effect Of Ethical Practices On Performance Of Kenya Cutflower Sector

William Kurere

Independent Consultant in Cut-Flower Firms Management in Kenya

Abstract: *Ethical practice is a key issue in Cut-Flower Sector Worldwide. These issues include; ethical production, work conditions for employees and fair trade. The aim of the study was to examine the impact of ethical practice on the performance of Kenya's cut-flower sector. The study used a descriptive research design with a target population of 35 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) operating in Nakuru County's 35 cut-flower enterprises. This population was chosen because of their capacity to see strategic leadership in action as well as business performance. The study employed a non-probabilistic purposive sampling technique to arrive at a sample size of 35 people, representing a census of all CEOs. The structured questionnaire was employed as the primary data gathering instrument in the study. To determine the effect of the ethical practice on performance, a regression model was utilized. The study found that ethical practice' and 'strategic direction had positive effect on cut-flower firms performance with 'ethical practice having effect cutflower firms' performance in Kenya. The study recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture's Department of Horticulture streamline Cut-flower management to comply with the international Standards on the value chain of Cut-Flower business. The study proposes that the management of cutflower firms should comply with all the standards required in the value chain process in the Cut-Flowers.*

Keywords: *Fair Trade, Ethical Practices, Performance of Cut-Flower Sector*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Kenyan flower industry is the 3rd largest flower supplier in the world and is among the country's three top foreign exchange earners. Flori-cultural exports are Kenya's biggest export earning, surpassing tourism as of the year 2008. The flower industry has a much higher proportion of women than other sectors making worsens issues particularly sexual harassment in the industry rampant (Muthoka, 2007). The contribution of cut flowers has made the horticultural sector to be among the fastest growing in the Kenyan economy (Barrientos, et al., 2003). Together with fruits and vegetables, cut flowers make up Kenya's horticulture industry which generates approximately US \$1billion annually to the country's economy. Statistics show that in 2014, the contribution of horticulture to the national GDP was 2.8% out of which 1.52% was from floriculture sector (Floriculture in Kenya, 2016). Fruits and vegetables are mainly grown by small-scale farmers compared to production of cut flowers and

export vegetables which are dominated by large-scale growers due to their capital intensive nature.

The sector's contribution to the economy through job creation, income generation to households, foreign exchange earnings and provision of input materials to the agro processing businesses cannot be overlooked. Approximately 4.5 million people derive their income directly from the sector and another 3.5 million are indirectly dependent on the sector countrywide (An overview of the Kenya horticulture industry, 2016). Europe forms the base market for Kenya's horticultural produce and the chief destinations being the UK, Switzerland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, France and the Netherlands.

Ethics refers to principles that define behavior as right or wrong and good or bad. Such principles do not always dictate a single "moral" course of action. They provide a means of evaluating and deciding among competing options (Rakesh, Anusha & Suresh, 2016). Most people have convictions about what is right and wrong based on religious beliefs, cultural

roots, family background, personal experiences, laws, organizational values, professional norms and political habits. These are not the best values to make ethical decisions by. This is not because they are unimportant, but because they are not universal. In contrast to consensus ethical values; such as basics trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship personal and professional beliefs vary over time, among cultures and among members of the same society. They are a source of continuous historical disagreement, even wars.

There is nothing wrong with having strong personal and professional moral convictions about right and wrong, but unfortunately, some people are "moral imperialists" who seek to impose their personal moral judgments on others. The universal ethical value of respect for others dictates honoring the dignity and autonomy of each person and cautions against self righteousness in areas of legitimate controversy. According to Ferrall, Fraedrich and Ferrell (2008) the need for established standards of behavior, had predisposed most organizations including flower cut firms, to evolve and entrench ethical practices as part of their culture. This is to mould and direct their employees' actions and value systems toward the expected "code of conduct" in an attempt to enhance corporate performance. The authors observed a number of well-published scandals, which eventually result to public outrage on deception and fraud in organizations. Unethical management practices affect corporate performance. Therefore he stressed the need for firms to integrate ethics in an attempt to establish those organizational conducts that conform to established standards.

The market accreditation agencies for the cut flowers include the FLO, MPS-SQ, ICC, FPEAK and KFC. The cut flower industry is guided by international standards of practice that emphasize protection of basic rights of the workers (Riisgaard, 2011). The role of market accreditation agencies is to ensure that the cut flower farms adhere to the laid down standard code which are social, economic and environmental. The market accreditation agencies are forms the basis of accrediting the cut flower farms in Kenya. Market accrediting agencies are either local or international. The International codes supposed to be implemented in the industry include globally accepted quality standards such as *Milieu Programma Sierteelt* (MPS), which guides the production and marketing in the industry.

More specifically, MPS focuses on creating a conducive social and environmental friendly working culture, recognized at global level (Meleseh and Helmsing, 2010). These standards are stipulated in ILO (2003) meaning that these rights are universal, and that they apply to all people in all states irrespective of the economic development of a specific country. The local accrediting bodies include the Kenya Flower Council (KFC) and the Fresh Produce Exporters Association of Kenya (FPEAK). On the other hand, the international ones include MPS Social (recognised in Dutch markets), Ethical Trading Initiative base-code (UK Markets), Flower Labour Programme (FLP), Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) and Fair Flowers Fair Plants and Rainforest Alliance among other ethical standards (KHRC, 2012).

Accrediting agencies' function is to participate in standardization initiatives for the cut flower business in order to cleanse the industry of unfavorable market perceptions about cut flower production. As a result, the industry has developed both local and international codes of practice that are audited by both local and worldwide market accrediting authorities that address both environmental and social criteria. Cut flower farms must follow these codes in order for their products to be accepted in the worldwide market. The social context of the code is modest and carried out superficially among the three aspects inspected, which are environmental and social factors.

One can also challenge the legitimacy of multi-stakeholder efforts such as the Horticultural Ethical Business Initiative, in which key stakeholders (trade unions, but most crucially, workers themselves) are absent. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the establishment and monitoring of PSSs has on occasion allowed NGOs and management to work things out bilaterally, allowing employers to avoid bargaining with employees and their representatives (a criticism that NGOs would refute by arguing that they focus on industries where unions are weak or non-existent) (Eade, 2014). As a result, the demand for ethical trade practices, the right to organize labor unions, human rights observance, the abolition of child labor, and sustainable environmental practices has increased in developing nations participating in the global cut flower market (Donohoe, 2008).

Private enterprises are likewise subject to fair and ethical trade standards in the international commerce of flowers. 241 Multinational corporations, labor unions, and social and environmental organizations have collaborated to promote corporate social responsibility in developing country flower farms by improving labor and environmental conditions. The International Code of Conduct ("ICC") for the Production of Flowers is one result of this endeavor. It establishes universal guidelines for flower farms that advocate limiting the negative impact of flower production (Aaronson, 2003). Nonetheless, flower production poses health risks to both producers and consumers (Singh, 2013).

Kenya is a signatory to the International Standard Codes, which govern worker safety procedures in the cut flower business. "Despite a multiplicity of laws protecting flower farms, little attention has been taken to determining whether the existence of these codes has made any major impact to employees themselves," according to the report (Opondo and Hale, 2005:307). Ethical trade tries to recover trade as a nexus of interactions among human actors in the setting of global commodity chains in which human labor figures only as a "inanimate" part of production (Smith, 1998, p. 20). This is accomplished through communication, which is broadly defined as a "symbolic process through which reality is made, maintained, repaired, and modified" (Carey, 2008).

The Kenyan cut flower business is expanding, with state-of-the-art greenhouses, and floral certifying groups are striving to document and address issues such as land grabbing (Tizazu & Workie, 2018), long working hours, poor worker treatment and payment, and other injustices such as sexual harassment. Furthermore, certification bodies regulate production standards and appropriate agricultural practices regarding pesticide usage and water management (Mekonnen

et al., 2012). Singh (2013) examines the behavior of flower consumers in wealthy nations when labor rights are respected and political actors and media outlets express concern about the negative externalities often associated with cut flower production in the place of origin. The extent to which the Cut-Flower firms in Kenya apply ethical practices and the extent to which such practices impact performance of the firms is the missing link that the proposed study analyzed.

II. LITERATURE

A. THEORIES INFORMING THE STUDY

a. THE SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

The theory is founded on utilitarian logic, which regards persons as rational individuals striving to maximize their material rewards in a free and competitive market space by selecting the most appealing based on cost and benefit calculations (Abraham, 1982). George Homans and Peter Blau were sociology's proponents of Social Exchange Theory. Homans developed the thesis in 1950, basing his reasoning on the proposition that any connection between individuals influences a specific behavior among human beings in society (Kane-Urrabazo, 2006). As a result, Homans (2003:54) defined social exchange as "the interchange of activity, tangible or intangible, more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two people." Homan's social exchange theory assertions were based on a person's past history of success, stimulation, the value of an action, and the acquisition of values, all of which affect a person's current conduct.

When workers' wellbeing is good in the cut flower industry, they are more inclined to work harder, optimizing productivity and improving the firm's profits. On the contrary, poor worker wellbeing leads to low output due to wasteful hours caused by low worker morale and industrial strikes. According to Odhong and Omolo, the scenario has a detrimental impact on labor productivity because of high labor expenses (2014). Social Exchange Theory, according to Homans has five basic propositions which set up the study of social behaviour in terms of rewards and punishments. These include: success, stimulus, deprivation-satiation, value and finally, the rationality.

The owners of capital in the cut flower sector are thus perceived to be engaging in social engagement with the workers. Capital owners expect a surplus in production as a reward, whereas employees demand high wages and decent working conditions. The reciprocal expectation is that if employees realize high earnings and pleasant working conditions, the relationship between them and capital owners will continue. However, if workers are not compensated, they may choose to discontinue their connection with capital owners. Although workers expect to be rewarded or punished, there are other factors influencing their well-being at work. Social Exchange Theory was the basis for the analysis of ethical practices in the Cut-Flower Firms in Kenya.

b. DECISION THEORY

Most decision-making theory has been developed in the twentieth century. Decision theory is the study of the reasoning underlying an agent's choices (Steele & Orri, 2015). It can be broken into two branches: normative decision theory, which gives advice on how to make the best decisions, given a set of uncertain beliefs and a set of values; and descriptive decision theory, which analyses how existing, possibly irrational agents actually make decisions. Normative or prescriptive decision theory is concerned with identifying the best decision to make, modeling an ideal decision maker who is able to compute with perfect accuracy and is fully rational. The practical application of this prescriptive approach (how people ought to make decisions) is called decision analysis, and is aimed at finding tools, methodologies and software (decision support systems) to help people make better decisions (Myerson, 1991). In contrast, positive or descriptive decision theory is concerned with describing observed behaviours under the assumption that the decision-making agents are behaving under some consistent rules (Steele & Orri, 2015). The prescriptions or predictions about behaviour that positive decision theory produces allow for further tests of the kind of decision-making that occurs in practice. There is a thriving dialogue with experimental economics, which uses laboratory and field experiments to evaluate and inform theory. Decision-making means the adoption and application of rational choice for the management of private, business or governmental organization in an efficient manner. As such, the theory is applicable in this study as the management should make decisions on the ethical practice reinforcement strategies to be used in their organizations and how such can be implemented to boost ethical behaviour hence performance.

B. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The cut flower markets have attached a lot of importance to the labour ethics in cut flower production, health, and environmental issues which have affected the cost of production (Laibuni *et al.*, 2012). The accreditation agencies have put in place codes to be followed in production of the cut flowers. Despite, the industry collecting massive profits there have been documentation of degradation of the workers' welfare which has been wanting especially on wages and working conditions like use of Physical Protective Equipment (PPE) (Opondo, 2008; Leipold & Morgante, 2013). Nevertheless, what impact has the compliance to the certification codes had on the workers' welfare in the industry?

According to Manaf and Latif (2014), performance is the ability of an organization to fulfill the demands of the investors by assessing the company's achievements. In this study performance is measured in terms of market share growth, sales, profitability, return on assets, employment growth, customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. Donker, Poff and Zahir (2008) found that ethics positively influence workers to take responsibility of their work which results in improved firm performance. Hilman and Gorondutse (2003) found perceived ethics to be positively associated with Flowercut firms' performances. According to Ahamed (2-12)

and Bbas (2019), it is also important to take into consideration the issue of corporate social responsibility (CSR) when discussing about ethics among small businesses. This is because CSR is often neglected by Flower cut firms regardless of the positive benefits it can bring to their organizations. Kamyabi, Barzegar & Kohestani (2013) and Brammer (2007) found a positive relationship between CSR and financial performance. Dutta and Banerjee (2011) find that adhering to ethical standards can improve the performance of small businesses beyond national borders.

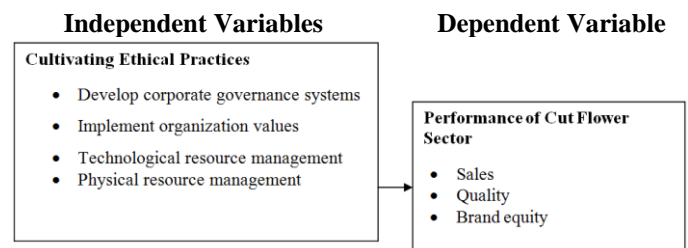
Furthermore, Alli (2008) revealed that workers in the cut flower sector were subjected to hazardous working conditions, inadequate safety and health requirements, and environmental dangers. The demand has been that capital owners in the cut flower sector adhere to internationally recognized environmental and social norms marshaled by local and international accrediting bodies, among other stakeholders in standardization (Riisgaard and Gibbon, 2014). Despite the existence of these rules, their effectiveness in protecting workers' wellbeing is unclear. It is consequently critical to monitor the amount of adherence to codes in the cut flower business since it impacts the wellbeing of workers in the cut flower industry.

These standards of practice from accreditation agencies strive to provide a good working environment for both workers and capital owners, as well as to be in harmony with the working environment. According to Riisgaard and Gibbon (2014), the implementation of the aforementioned standards has been delayed, resulting in continuous worker complaints. Nonetheless, this stands in stark contrast to the growing need for ethical and environmental norms in the European flower trade. Thus, to what extent are worker complaints in cut flower farms related to noncompliance with certification codes? According to a report by Korovkin and Sanmiguel-Valderrama (2007), capital owners have had little success in implementing the codes. However, how has the adoption of the codes by the capital owners influenced the welfare of the workers?

According to Dolan (2008), owners of cut flower farms in some cases failed to follow the standard norms, thus hurting workers' welfare. What happens to the market in such a case? It is unclear what happens when a farm fails to follow the rules. According to Morgante and Leipold (2013), complying to certification rules benefits solely the proprietors of cut flower farms. However, there has been conflicting evidence regarding compliance with standard codes, where workers have benefited as a result of cut flower farms' compliance with certification codes.

According to Barrientos (2014), there has been an increase in conformity with international standards codes, with an estimated 93 of 177 flower exporting farms accredited for either social or environmental norms, and 73 for both. According to Gibbon and Riisgaard (2014), 49 big flower farms under the Kenyan Flower Council have conformed with standardized norms, accounting for 59 percent of the land under cut flower production. Barrientos (2014) and Gibbon and Riisgaard (2014) found that cut flower farms were more compliant with international standards regulations.

C. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Source: (Author, 2022)

Figure 1: Effect of Strategic Leadership Components on Organisation Performance

In this study, the independent variable ethical practices measured using the following indicators; corporate governance systems, organizational values, technological and physical resource management. The dependent variable is performance of Cut-Flower Sector measured using indicators as; sales, quality and brand equity. The study hypothesizing that when cutflower firms implement ethical practices then they are likely to improve on their performance in terms of sales volumes, quality delivery and advancing their respective brand equity assuming that business environment, motivation, employees' knowledge and skills are controlled as moderating variables.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design that the study adopted is a descriptive research design. The target population was the members of top management drawn from the thirty five Cutflower firms in Nakuru County, making a total of thirty five chief executive officers. Chief Executive Officer of each of the thirty five Cutflower firms of Nakuru County were purposively selected to respond to the research questions. The researcher took a census of all the thirty five chief executive officers by means of self administered questionnaire. The firms' physical addresses was used to arrange on how the questionnaires was delivered and collected.

The researcher used close ended questionnaires based on Likert Scale as the main mode of data collection. The use of questionnaires is justified because they assured an effective way of collecting information from a population in a short period of time and at a reduced cost. The questionnaires also facilitate easier coding and analysis of data collected (Kothari, 2004). The closed ended questions ensured that the respondents are restricted to certain categories in their responses for easy data collection, analysis and interpretation. The questionnaires were personally administered by the researcher, dropped and picked after one day for purposes of higher response rate. The data was analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Organizational control and resource portfolio on performance of cutflower firms was tested with the Regression Model in equation 1,

$$y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots (1).$$

Where;

Y = Organisation performance; α = constant; β_1 = parameter estimates; X_1 = Ethical Practice; ε = the error of prediction.

IV. FINDINGS

This section presents the analysis and hypothesis test of effect of ethical practice on performance of Cut flower firms in Nakuru County. The study carried out in-depth analysis to the specific elements ethical practice elements and how they related with cutflower firms' performance.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.693 ^a	.481	.441	.56748

Table 1: R Square

The R value was 0.693 whereas R Square was 0.481, which indicated a low degree of correlation. The R^2 value indicates how much of the dependent variable, "cutflower firms' performance", was explained by the elements of independent variables, "ethical practice". In this case, 48.1% was the R Squared, which was high indicating low degree of correlation.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	27.132	5	3.876	12.036	.000 ^b
Residual	29.305	91	.322		
Total	56.437	96			

Table 2: ANOVA

Predictors "having effective corporate governance systems with ethical values being shared among employees, availability of rules that govern employees behaviours, firms' competitors and peers recognizes our ethical practices, the firms were free from corruption and that breaking of rules of conduct were not tolerated in the firms.." Dependent variable "cutflower firms performance. Table 2 indicated that the regression model predicted the outcome variable significantly with $p=0.000<0.05$, indicated that; overall, the model did statistically and significantly predicted the outcome variable.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1 (Constant)	2.249	.333		6.751	.000
effective corporate governance	.067	.097	.097	.686	.494
Ethical practice - free of corruption rules that govern behaviour	.324	.132	.413	2.464	.016
Breaking rules not tolerated competitors recognizes ethical practices	-.447	.126	-.500	-3.557	.001
	.068	.071	.102	.950	.345
	.243	.076	.364	3.185	.002

Table 3: Effect of Ethical Practice on Performance

Table 4.14 shows the results of the analysis of the effect of have effective corporate governance systems on performance of Cut-flowers in Nakuru County. The study established significant Ethical values are shared among employees on performance of Cut-Flowers in Kenya ($\beta=0.324$, $p=0.016<0.05$). This finding showed that an increase in ethical values is shared among employees by 1 unit would lead to 0.324 multiple units increase in performance of Kenyan Cut-Flowers. Findings on organizational corruption established that the organizational corruption had significant negative effect on performance of Cut-Flowers in Kenya ($\beta=-.447$, $p=0.001<0.05$). This finding showed that an increase in organizational corruption by the flower firms by 1 unit would lead to 0.447 multiple units decrease in performance of Kenyan cut-flower firms.

Finally, further findings on competitors recognizes ethical practices established a significant effect on competitors recognizes ethical practices ($\beta=0.243$, $p=0.002<0.05$). This finding showed that an increase in competitors recognizes ethical practices by 1 unit would lead to 0.243 multiple units increase in performance of Kenya Cut-Flower. The objective of the investigation was to analyze the effect of ethical practices on performance of Cut flower firms in Nakuru County. Based on the analyzed data, the investigation established that ethical practices affected performance of Kenyan Cut-Flowers. The study established three of the elements of ethical practices had effect on firms' performance hence there was evidence to reject the H_{01} : Ethical practices do not significantly affect performance of Cut flower firms in Nakuru County.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSION

Findings on ethical practice established that the cutflower firms in Nakuru County employed all the elements ethical practice as an element of strategic leadership including; having effective corporate governance systems with ethical values being shared among employees, availability of rules that govern employees behaviours, firms' competitors and peers recognizes our ethical practices, the firms were free from corruption and that breaking of rules of conduct were not tolerated in the firms. This was based on empirical evidence ethical practice' and 'strategic direction had positive effect on cut-flower firms performance with 'ethical practice having effect cutflower firms' performance in Kenya.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and the conclusions on effect of strategic leadership components on performance of Kenya Cutflower Sector, taking the case of Cutflower firms in Nakuru County, the study came up with the following recommendations to enhance strategic leadership in the cutflower firms in Kenya;

- ✓ The department of Horticulture of the Ministry of Agriculture should streamline Cutflower management to comply with the principal of ethical practices in Cut-

Flower firms in order to protect the environment and the lives of both the workers and the citizens living around the farms.

- ✓ To improve practice of ethical practices, the study recommends that the management of cutflower firms should comply with all the standards required in the value chain process in the Cut-Flowers.
- ✓ Ethical practice in the Cut_Flower farms being an important aspect of the value chain, the study recommends that the firms should develop effective ethical practices procedures that are can be monitored and evaluative for the benefit of all stakeholders.

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A study on bio-chemical effect of Cut_flower farming on the environment is important since the production of the Cut-Flowers is heavily dependent on chemicals. The findings from the study will supplement the findings of the current study that established that ethical practices had significant positive effect on performance of Kenyan Cut_Flowers which this study did not consider.

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