

INFLUENCE OF SKILL INVENTORY DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN SELECTED DEPARTMENTS AT THE NAKURU COUNTY GOVERNMENT, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The general purpose of this study was to examine the influence of skill inventory diversity on employee productivity in selected departments at the Nakuru County Government. The study adapted a descriptive research design. The population of this study comprised all the 5,762 permanent employees working in the Nakuru County Government. The study used clustered sampling where a sample 152 employees were selected from two departments of the Nakuru County Government. Quantitative data was collected using structured questionnaires while qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interview guides. Validity was assessed by subjecting the instruments to scrutiny by university research supervisors while reliability was assessed by analysing pilot-test data using the Cronbach alpha method. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse quantitative data while the independent sample t-test and linear regression analysis were used to examine the influence of skill inventory diversity on employee productivity in selected departments at NCG. Thematic analysis technique was used to analyse the qualitative data. Findings revealed that there is a high level of skill inventory diversity in the selected departments (mean rating= 76%). Regression analysis results showed that skill inventory diversity ($\beta = .495$, $p = .000$) had a positive and statistically significant influence on employee productivity at selected departments at NCG. The study recommends that to improve employee productivity, the management should make optimum use of the diverse skills present within the organisation to achieve the mission and vision of the organisation. The departments should also ensure that recruitment processes are designed to attract candidates with diverse skills and competencies.

Keywords: Workforce diversity, skill inventory diversity, employee productivity, County Governments, Nakuru County.

1. INTRODUCTION

Workforce diversity refers to human resource made up of people with different qualities or that come from different cultural groups. From individual perspective, diversity is viewed in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, race, physical ability, education background, and skills (Dike, 2013). Workforce diversity is becoming an important subject in organizational research because the society in which most organizations operate has also become diverse (Bove & Elia, 2017). Traditionally, creating a diverse workforce was viewed as a strategy for increasing the legitimacy of organizations within the society in which they operate.

Studies conducted in different parts of the globe give contradicting results regarding the effect of workforce diversity. In the U.S.A, Saxena (2014) found that workforce diversity increases the productivity of the workforce by introducing diverse views, assortments of ideas, varied ways of thinking, different ways of accomplishing tasks, and multiple ways of solving problems. In India, Bedi, Iakra, and Gupta (2014) found that organizations with diverse workforce are likely to be more innovative and creative because diversity introduces different ways of thinking into the organizations. In a study focusing on airline workers in Malaysia, Mun, Chern, Fong, and Yuan (2011) found that gender and education diversity had a positive significant influence on employee performance. On the other hand, age diversity had a negative significant influence on the workers' performance. Ethnic diversity had no significant influence on staff performance.

The subject of diversity is given prominence within the Kenyan public sector workforce. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 introduced the 2/3 gender principle that requires that no more than 2/3 of the employees of a given public institution be of the same gender (Republic of Kenya, 2010). Section 65 of the County Government Act also requires that at least 30% of public positions in county government be filled by people that are not from the dominant communities (Musau, 2015). There are also a handful of laws that call for the inclusion of youths and persons with disability in public sector workforce. Despite the introduction of these policies in the Kenyan public sector close to a decade ago, their implication on the productivity of the public sector workforce is not clear.

The Nakuru County Government (NCG) has made noteworthy progress in terms of implementing the diversity provision stipulated in the constitution. It is not clear how such initiatives have affected productivity in the NCG. There are a number of studies that have examined the influence of workforce diversity on employee productivity in the Kenyan context including Ikama (2010) and Mwangi (2015), but few have focused on county governments. Only the study by Mwatuma (2015) focused on workforce diversity in county government with a specific focus on Mombasa County. The study however explored the influence of ethnic, gender,

and educational background diversity on employees' performance, but did not examine skill inventory diversity. The current study sought to address this gap by examining the influence of skill inventory diversity on employee performance in selected departments at the Nakuru County Government (NCG).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee productivity is the extent to which employees perform their duties efficiently and effectively (Itumbiri, 2013). Various indicators are used to measure productivity including the amount of goods or services that an employee produces in a given period, efficient utilization of resources, and customer satisfaction. Employee productivity is the pillar of any organization. The success of any institution is closely tied to diligence and productivity of its workers. As Nwannebuife (2017) explained, the human elements within the organization play the essential role of utilizing other resources to generate output. If the manpower of an organization is not efficient and effective, the other resources of the organization become less effective.

In their study, Lankeu and Maket (2012) observed that the Kenyan civil service was characterized by low productivity, high levels of corruption, inefficiency, and lack of transparency. Understanding factors that influence employee productivity is critical to improving the performance of public sector organizations in Kenya. Existing body of literature has examined various factors that have the potential of influencing productivity (Hunjura, Raza, & Munir, 2014). One of the factors that have become important in modern organizations is the diversity of the workforce. Due to factors such as globalization and increased mobility, the society is increasingly becoming diverse in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, education background, and economic and social status among other variables (Bove & Elia, 2017). This diversity is also reflected in workers skill inventory.

Skill inventory diversity refers to the inclusion of people with different abilities, talents, education backgrounds, and experiences within the organization's workforce. According to Malaolu and Ogbuabor (2013), the performance of an organization is largely dependent on the competency, innovativeness, and commitment of the labour force. In their study examining the effect of workforce diversity on employee performance in Al-Madinah International University in Malaysia, Al-Ahmad and Alkhawani (2017) found that there exists a significant relationship between skill inventory diversity marked by the employees education background and employee performance. The study recommended that Al-Madinah International University should enhance educational diversity as this increases awareness and knowledge as mutual learning with intellectuals with wider pool of knowledge results in greater performance.

The study by Rizwan, Khan, Nadeem and Abbas (2016) also found that there is a positive significant relationship between pool of skills in the workforce and employee performance in the banking sector of Pakistan. Parrotta, Pozzoli and Pytlikova (2011) in their study on the effect of labour diversity on firms' productivity in Denmark found that education diversity influences productivity of employees. The study recommended that organisations should implement diversity management, modern techniques and integration practices to promote a heterogeneous workforce in order to increase their competitive advantage. In Kenya, Kyomugisha (2016) examined the effect of workforce diversity management on performance of international development non-governmental organisations in Kenya. Results showed that diversity in training influences organisational performance. The study recommended that equity in recruitment process should be enhanced to tap employees who are qualified and skilled. The study further recommended that special training should be given especially to persons with disability.

Similarly, Munjuri (2012) found that there exists a significant level of association between the wealth of skills within an organization and employee performance in the banking sector in Kenya. The study recommended that banking sector should introduce strategic human resource management studies for human resource managers so as to embrace a diverse workforce that promotes knowledge sharing and improved performance. In addition, Gaunya (2015) observed that there is a positive relationship between educational background diversity and employee performance in the public sector in Kenya.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized the descriptive research design. The target population was 5,762 employees of the NCG. The sample size was determined to be 152 respondents using the Taro Yamane sample size formulae

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where n= Sample size, N= Population (in this case 5,762 workers), e= Margin of errors (in this study set at 8%). The clustered sampling technique was utilized to select the respondents where the 10 departments at the NCG were used as clusters. Two departments (Health/ Medical Services Department and the Education & ICT Department) were selected purposively based on the large number of staff in these departments and their involvement in provision of basic services to communities. The plan was to collect data from 76 employees in each of the two departments. Systematic sampling method was used to select participants from each of the two departments where every 10th staff on the list of employees in each department was selected until

the required number (76 respondents per departments) was attained. Data was collected through the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions, which provided respondents a pre-defined set of responses to choose from mainly in the form of Likert scale. The interview guides were semi-structured in nature meaning that they comprised of a set of uninformed questions for all interviewees, and then follow-up questions were asked based on interviewees responses to the initial questions.

The validity of data collection instruments was improved through expert where the researcher sought the input of university research supervisors, who checked all the questions to ensure clarity of the questions and that the questions captured what the study intends to measure. The validity of the instrument was also enhanced by conducting a pilot study that involved 30 staffs (20% of the sample for the main study) selected from the Lands and Urban Planning Department. The pilot data enabled the researcher to assess the instruments ability to provide the data needed to address the research objectives. Reliability of the instruments was examined by analysing the data collected during the pilot study using the Cronbach alpha methods. Results of the reliability analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha Results

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Skill Inventory Diversity	7	0.770
Employee Productivity	7	0.734

As Table 1 shows, the Likert scale for all the two main variables of the study had a Cronbach alpha that was above the acceptable value of 0.7. This implies that all the items in the Likert scale were worthy of being retained. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents using the drop-off and pick up method. The researcher made prior appointments with the administrators so as to agree on the appropriate time to have the interviews within the study timeframe.

Once the data was collected, it was cleaned and coded into meaningful parameters that can be read by the computer to ease analysis of the data. Close-ended questions in the questionnaire was analysed using the descriptive statistics with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data from the semi-structured interviews was analysed using the thematic technique. The data was grouped into theme according to the objectives and presented in form of narratives. The independent sample t-test was used to assess the influence of skill inventory diversity on

employee productivity. The linear regression analysis was also conducted in order to examine how skill inventory diversity influence employees’ productivity. The following regression model was formulated:

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

Where, Y= employee productivity in selected departments at the NCG, β_0 = constant, β_1 , = Beta coefficient for skill inventory diversity, X_1 = skill inventory diversity, and e= error term.

4. DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

Out of the 152 questionnaires that were distributed, 125 were dully completed and returned to the researcher. This figure marks a response rate of 82.2%. Interviews were also held with four administrators in the two departments. Seventy three out of the 152 respondents were female, which equals to 58% of the sample. A total of 52 male employees completed the study, which equals to 42%. From the findings, it is evident that all genders were adequately represented in the study. The mean age of the respondents was 36.1 years. The youngest respondent was 20 years old while the oldest was 59 years. In terms of education, people with bachelors’ degree had the highest representation in the sample at 43.2% followed by people with the diploma education at 38.4%. About 9.6% of the respondents had attained at least the postgraduate level of education, 7.2% had the secondary level of education, and 1.6% had the primary level of education.

Table 2: Respondent Demographic Traits

Demographic Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	52	42
	Female	73	58
Highest Education Level	Primary School	2	1.6
	Secondary School	9	7.2
	Diploma	48	38.4
	Degree	54	43.2
	Postgraduate & above	12	9.6
Department	Health	61	49
	Education & ICT	64	51

Sixty four respondents that were equal to 51% of the sample were from the Education & ICT department while the remaining 61 (49%) were from the health department. The results indicate that both departments had fair representation in the sample. The respondents had served at the NCG for an average of 9.38 years. This duration is sufficient to give the respondents adequate understanding of the current situation within NCG.

4.1 Employee Productivity at the NCG

Employee productivity was the dependent variable of the study. To assess study began the status of employee productivity at the NCG, employees were presented with a list of 7 items relating to employee productivity and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement on five point scale: 5= Strongly Agree, 4 =Agree, 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 2 =Disagree, and 1= Strongly Disagree.

As illustrated in Table 3, respondents were presented with several statements aimed at assessing the level of employee productivity in the selected departments at the NCG. The first statement was whether there was high level of creativity and innovation within their department leading to greater productivity. The statement is based on the rationale that to be more productive, employees need to have the capacity to devise new ways of doing things and resolving problems (Malaolu and Ogbuabor, 2013). It has also been argued that diversity contributes to productivity by introducing multiple ways of thinking, thereby increasing creativity and innovation. As indicated by the mean of 3.69, the majority of the respondents agreed that that there was a high level of creativity and innovation within their department. The issue of creativity and innovation was captured during the interviewee by one administrator who shared that:

“Employees have developed creative ways of managing problems within the department by supporting new communication systems such as watssup groups and Instagram pages where they can easily communicate on issues affecting them as well as new criteria of handling issues.”(Interviewee, AD1, 2019)

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Productivity

No.	Statement	N	Mean	S.D
1	There is a high level of creativity and innovation within the department leading to greater productivity	125	3.69	.971
2	There is a high level of cohesion and teamwork among the employees department leading to greater productivity	125	3.85	.916
3	There is a high level of motivation among the staff of the department leading to greater productivity	125	3.66	1.023
4	The departments' workforce comprises of people with different skills leading to greater productivity	125	3.91	1.032
5	The department offers high quality services to its clients leading to greater productivity	125	3.95	.869
6	There is low level of absenteeism among the employees of the department leading to greater productivity	125	3.83	.940
7	There efficient utilization of resources by the department's employees leading to greater productivity	125	4.00	.907
Aggregate Score		125	26.90	5.389

The second statement was whether there was a high level of cohesion and team work within the respondents department. Cohesion and team work have also been cited as essential indicators of productivity (Muthiora, 2017). Cohesion and teamwork is also considered as one of the pathways through which workforce diversity influences workers productivities. In response to this issue, the majority of the respondents also agreed (mean= 3.85) that there was a high level of cohesion and team work within their departments. Cohesion and team work was captured during the interviewee with the administrators who shared that:

“When people work together as a team, they create a sense of trust with each other and thus they feel secure to raise their voices on issues affecting them, issues that add value to their departments resulting to increased productivity.” (Interviewee, AD4, 2019)

The issue of cohesion and team work was also raised by another administrator who said that:

“Employees who work together develop a sense of belonging to the organisation. Since they feel that they are part and parcel of the organisation, they increase efforts in their assigned roles so as to develop their organisation.”(Interviewee, AD2, 2019).

Productivity was also assessed in terms of level of staff motivation. According to Roberts and Creary (2013), workforce diversity can affect employees' productivity by influencing the level of staff motivation by either making staffs feel included or excluded within the workplace. Therefore, assessing the level of staff motivation would give a useful indication of the level of workers' productivity. From the results in Table 4.4, the respondents agreed (mean= 3.66) that there is a high level of motivation among the staff in their respective departments. Staff motivation was highlighted during the interviewee where one of the administrators mentioned that:

“Employees working within the department are self-motivated, they do not need to be followed around to check whether they have accomplished their tasks and when they check in and check out in the department, they voluntarily work in their respective departments as is expected of them.” (Interviewee, AD1, 2019)

Another item that was used to assess productivity was whether surveyed departments had staff with different skills. It has also been argued that one of the ways in which workplace diversity contributes to productivity is by bringing people with diverse skills and talents into the organization (Ramarajan & Thomas, 2010). As indicated by the mean of 3.91, the respondents agreed that their departments comprised of people with different skills. Different skills within the department were captured during the interview. One of the administrators shared that:

“Different skills are needed in the department. Formal and informal skills are all needed as each of the respective individuals is assigned to a specific role that needs unique skills for the accomplishment of these different roles. Different diverse skills results to diverse ideas resulting to implementation of the best thus increasing productivity.” (Interviewee, AD2, 2019).

Respondents were also asked whether their department provides quality services to clients. Quality of service is also an important indicator of productivity. A productive workforce should be in a position to provide goods and services that satisfy customers' needs. In response to this issue, the respondents agreed (mean= 3.95) that by their department offered high quality services to staff. During the interviewee, one of the administrators shared that:

“It is the mandate of the employees working at the NCG, to provide quality services to its clientele, there are telephone numbers provided to report any issues pertaining the provision of substandard services and any misconduct of the employees.” (Interviewee, AD1, 2019).

Statement six in the Likert scale sought to assess productivity from the perspective of workers absenteeism. This item is informed by the rationale that high rate of absenteeism is bound to affect the productivity of a particular government department as employees are not there to work. Workforce diversity can contribute to high level or low level of absenteeism depending on workers feel adequately included in the workforce. From Table 4.4, the respondents agreed (mean=3.83) that there were low levels of absenteeism in their departments.

The final indicator that was used to measure productivity was efficient utilization of resource. A workforce becomes more productive when it develops the capability to use the resources at its disposal more efficient and effectively. It has been argued that workforce diversity tends to promote efficiency by introducing diverse ideas regarding how organizational resources should be utilized. On this issue, the respondents agreed (mean=4) that there is efficient utilization of resources by department employees leading to greater productivity. However, during the interview one of the administrators mentioned that:

“Regular training is important to increase the technical know-how of the employees especially in the health department. Provision of physical resources is one thing and training the personnel of how to effectively use these machines and equipment’s is another thing. The provision of these equipment, and the training on the usage so go hand in hand to facilitate productivity. (Interviewee, AD1, 2019)

The overall productivity score was 26.90 out of a highest possible score of 35 (7 *5). Therefore, according to the respondents rating of the seven items, the productivity level of the NCG stands at 76.9%. The finding is not consistent with earlier studies such as Hope (2012), who found that the public sector in Kenya has been underperforming and not servicing the public interest with optimal capability. Lankeu and Maket (2012) also found that the public service in Kenya was characterized by low productivity, corruption, inefficiency, and lack of productivity. To facilitate comparison, the productivity scores of each of the two departments under study (health and education) were computed as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Difference in Employee Productivity Score between two Departments

Department	N	Mean (μ)	μ Difference	T	Sig.
Education & ICT	64	28.52	3.25	3.253	.000
Health	61	25.27			
Total	125	26.90			

As displayed in Table 4, the Education and ICT department had a higher employee productivity score (mean= 28.52) than the health department (mean= 25.27). The difference in the mean employee productivity score of the two departments of 3.25. The independent sample t-test showed that this difference in mean employee productivity score was statistically significant (t=3.253, sig.= 0.000). This implies that the education and ICT department had a significantly higher level of employee productivity than the health department.

4.2 Skill Inventory Diversity and Employee Productivity

Skill inventory diversity was the independent variable of the study. To assess this issue, respondents were presented with a set of seven statement relating to skill inventory diversity and asked to indicate their level of agreement on five point scale (1=strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). Their responses are presented in Table 5

Table 4.14: Descriptive Statistics for Skill Inventory Diversity

No.	Statement	N	Mean	S.D
1	My department give consideration to people with different skills during recruitment	125	3.66	1.047
2	People with different skills are given equal opportunity when it comes to training and development	125	3.78	.974
3	People with different skills are given equal opportunity when it comes to promotions	125	3.73	1.019
4	The departments workforce comprises of people with different skills	125	3.91	.942
5	The organisation's climate supports the inclusion of people with different skills	125	3.72	.997
6	There exists a positive relationship between employees with different skills within the department	125	3.82	.979
7	There is mutual respect between employees with different skills	125	3.99	.808
Aggregate Skill Inventory Diversity Score		125	26.61	5.505

Source: Field Data (2019)

As Table 4.5 illustrates, respondents on average agreed with all the seven statements on skill inventory diversity. The last statement had the highest mean of 3.99 suggesting that respondents pretty much agreed with the claim that there is mutual respect between employees with different skills. This finding is supported by an administrator during the interview who mentioned that:

“Employees with different skills interact well as they exchange ideas towards achievement of the objectives of the department. Others would also love to have basic information from the people with different skills to enrich their know-how skills.” (Interviewee, AD2, 2019)

The fourth statement had the second highest mean of 3.91 also indicating that there was a high level of agreement with the assertion that the workforce in the respondents’ departments comprises of people with different skills. This finding was brought forth during the interviewee where one of the administrators highlighted that:

“The department has several units that need specific specialization. It’s because of these specializations that different skills are needed to provide the expertise needed towards the achievement of the set goals and development.” (Interviewee, AD2, 2019)

However, during the interview, one of the administrators shared that:

“There is a skill mismatch within the county government as the government inherited the workforce from the previous municipal council whose skills does not match the functions that are current allocated to county government.” (Interviewee, AD4, 2019)

The first statement had the lowest mean of 3.66 suggesting that although respondents on average agreed with the claim that their department give consideration to people with different skills during recruitment, the level of agreement was weak. The fifth statement had the second lowest mean of 3.72 also a weak agreement with the claim that the organization climate at NCG supports the inclusion of people with different skills. This finding is consistent with a statement made during the interviewee that:

“Some of the employees feel that the skills that they have acquired are special compared to other skills from other employees. This creates a climate of tension. However, the work of the administrator is to ensure that they recognize all skills as important as the organisation will function better if all parts- all skills are effectively utilized and work together.” (Interviewee, AD2, 2019)

The aggregate skill inventory diversity score was 26.61 out of a highest possible score of 35. This implies that based on the seven items in the skill inventory diversity scale, respondents rated the level of skill inventory diversity at NCG to be 76.0%. This is the highest aggregate score among the five diversity dimensions under study suggesting that the NCG has done relatively well in terms of promoting skill inventory diversity.

4.3 Influence of Skill Inventory Diversity on Employee Productivity

To establish the influence of skill inventory diversity on employee productivity in the selected departments at the NCG, the skill inventory diversity score for each department were computed and the difference in the scores of the two department compared using the independent sample t-test. Results are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Different in Skill Inventory Diversity Scores of the Departments

Department	N	Mean (μ)	μ Difference	t	Sig.
Education & ICT	64	28.18	2.79	2.972	.003
Health	61	25.39			
Total	125	26.61			

Source: Field Data (2019)

As Table 4.6 reveals, the education & ICT department had a higher skill inventory diversity score (mean= 28.18) than the health department (25.39). From the findings, the department that had a higher employee productivity score also had a higher skill inventory diversity score. This finding suggests the existence of a positive relationship between skill inventory diversity and employee productivity. The difference in skill inventory scores of the education and health departments was 2.79. The independent sample t-test showed that this difference was statistically significant (t=2.972, sig. =.003). These findings led to the conclusion that skill inventory diversity has a positive and statistically significant influence on employee productivity at NCG.

These findings are consistent with the study by Rizwan *et al.* (2016), who found that there is a positive significant relationship between educational background and employee performance in the banking sector of Pakistan. The findings are also in line with the study by Kyomugisha (2016), who found that diversity in training had a positive influence on organisational performance of international development non-governmental organisations in Kenya. Parrotta *et al.* (2011) also found that education diversity influences productivity of employees in Denmark.

4.4 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was also conducted to further explore the influence of skill inventory on the productivity of employees of the selected departments at the NCG. Table 4.7 presents a summary of the results.

Table 4.7: Regression Analysis Results

Variable		r	r ²	Constant	F	P
Dependent	Employee productivity	.561	.315	3.720	68.280*	.000
Independent	Skill inventory diversity		Beta	Standardized Beta	t	
			.495*	.505	6.110	.000

As Table 4.7 illustrates, the model has an r-square value of 0.315, which suggests that the skill inventory diversity explained 31.5% of the total variance in workforce productivity in the selected department. Alexopoulos (2010) further explained that any model with an r-square that is greater than 0.1 should be considered appropriate for predicting a social phenomenon such as workforce productivity. The model had an F-value of 68.280 and p-value of less than 0.001, which indicates that the influence of skill inventory on employee productivity at the NCG is statistically significant. This finding is consistent with the study Saxena (2014) who found that workforce diversity was significantly associated with the productivity of the workforce. Table 4.7 further shows that skill inventory diversity had a beta coefficient of 0.495, which indicate that skill inventory has positive influence of employee productivity. Specifically, the beta value implies that when skill inventory diversity is increased by 1 unit, employee productivity would increase by 0.495 units.

5. CONCLUSION

Results led to the conclusion that skill inventory diversity has a statistically significant and positive influence on employee productivity. The study also concluded that skill inventory diversity is a well-developed dimension of workforce diversity as it had a high diversity score of 76.0%. The regression beta coefficients results also led to the conclusion that skill inventory has a statistically significant effect on employee productivity. The study therefore recommends that to improve on employee’s productivity, the management should make optimum use of the diverse skills present within the organisation to achieve the mission and vision of the organisation. The departments should also ensure that recruitment processes are design to attract candidates with diverse skills and competencies. The current study was limited to NCG, thus findings may not apply to other institutions. Future studies should consider replicating this study to other county governments in order to support the generalisation of the findings.

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ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

AD:	Administrator
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
NCG:	Nakuru County Government
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
U.S.A:	United States of America