

# EFFECTS OF WORKING ENVIRONMENT ON VILLAGE EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S PERFORMANCE IN RURAL AREAS IN TANZANIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The paper examined the effects of working environment on the performance of Village Executive Officers in rural areas in Tanzania specifically at Kalambo District Council in Rukwa Region in Tanzania, in terms of performance indicators which are availability, creativity, productivity, commitment and participation. The specific objectives were to assess VEOs working environment in rural areas, to determine the relationship between working environment and VEOs performance level and to identify measures for improving working environment for VEOs better performance. A cross-sectional survey study was conducted in four wards in the council, namely Kalalela, Katete, Mkowe and Katapuro. 39 Village Executive Officers were involved as respondents in the study. Data was collected from the primary source through interview guided by questionnaires and secondary sources through documentary review. The main variables in the questionnaire were socio-demographic characteristics (sex, age, marital status, education level and working experience), office building space, presence of privacy, availability of working tools. Analysis of data was done by using SPSS version 20 and presented in narrative and statistical ways where in narrative, sentences and paragraphs were used while in statistical form tables were used. The result revealed that the working environment elements have a significant effect on the performance of Village Executive Officers. These elements are presence of good quality office building, presence of standard houses to live and availability of working tools. The study concluded and that, the working environment has effects on the performance level of employees whereby absence of good quality office building, absence of houses, absence of transport facilities and absence of working equipment affect the performance of the VEO's, so Kalambo District Council authority should provide good working environment to its employees, so as to enable them to perform better.*

**KEY WORDS:** Working Environment, Village Executive Officers, Performance

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Many researchers agree that working environment has a significant impact on the performance of the organization. Hence when there is good working environment this will lead to the better performance of the organization as employees will be working comfortable in their environment. By working environment, we mean culture, work relationship, policies, good quality office buildings, working tools/equipment, transport services, health services, all these play a big role in influencing the employees to perform well their duties. (Massoudi & Hamdi 2017, Cherian *et al.*, 2021, Raziq & Maulabakhsh 2015, Vanesa *et al.*, 2019, Chaudhry, *et al.*, 2017).

Pressures from the on-going globalization of the world's economy, liberalization of trade and rapid technological progress are forcing many countries to change their employment patterns and organization of work in order to stay competitive (Radović-Marković *et al.*, 2019).

In Tanzania, The Local Government Reform Program (LGRP) was formulated and implemented by the government in order to address the problems which constrained the performance of the local government authorities. Through the programme, the government intends to strengthen local authorities and transform them

to be effective instruments of social and economic development at local level. This has been addressed by the government in "A Local Government Reform Policy Paper" of 1998. One of long-term goal of LGRP is reducing the proportion of Tanzanians working in poor environment to improve and equitable delivery of public services.

Dash and Mohanty (2019) argued that the employee disengagement is increasing and it becomes more important to make workplaces that positively influence workforce. The working environment is perhaps a key root causing employee's engagement or disengagement. Furthermore, Al Horr *et al.*, (2016) argue that improving the working environment reduces complaints and absenteeism while increasing productivity.

Budie *et al.*, (2019) argue that workplace satisfaction has been associated with job satisfaction. In recent years, employees' comfort on the job, determined by workplace conditions and environment has been recognized as an important factor for measuring their productivity. The physical aspects of a workplace environment can have a direct impact on the productivity, health and safety, comfort, concentration, job satisfaction and morale of the people within it. When people are working in situations that suit their physical and mental abilities, the correct fit between the person and the work task is accomplished. People are then in the optimum situation for learning, working and achieving, without adverse health consequences, e.g., injury, illness.

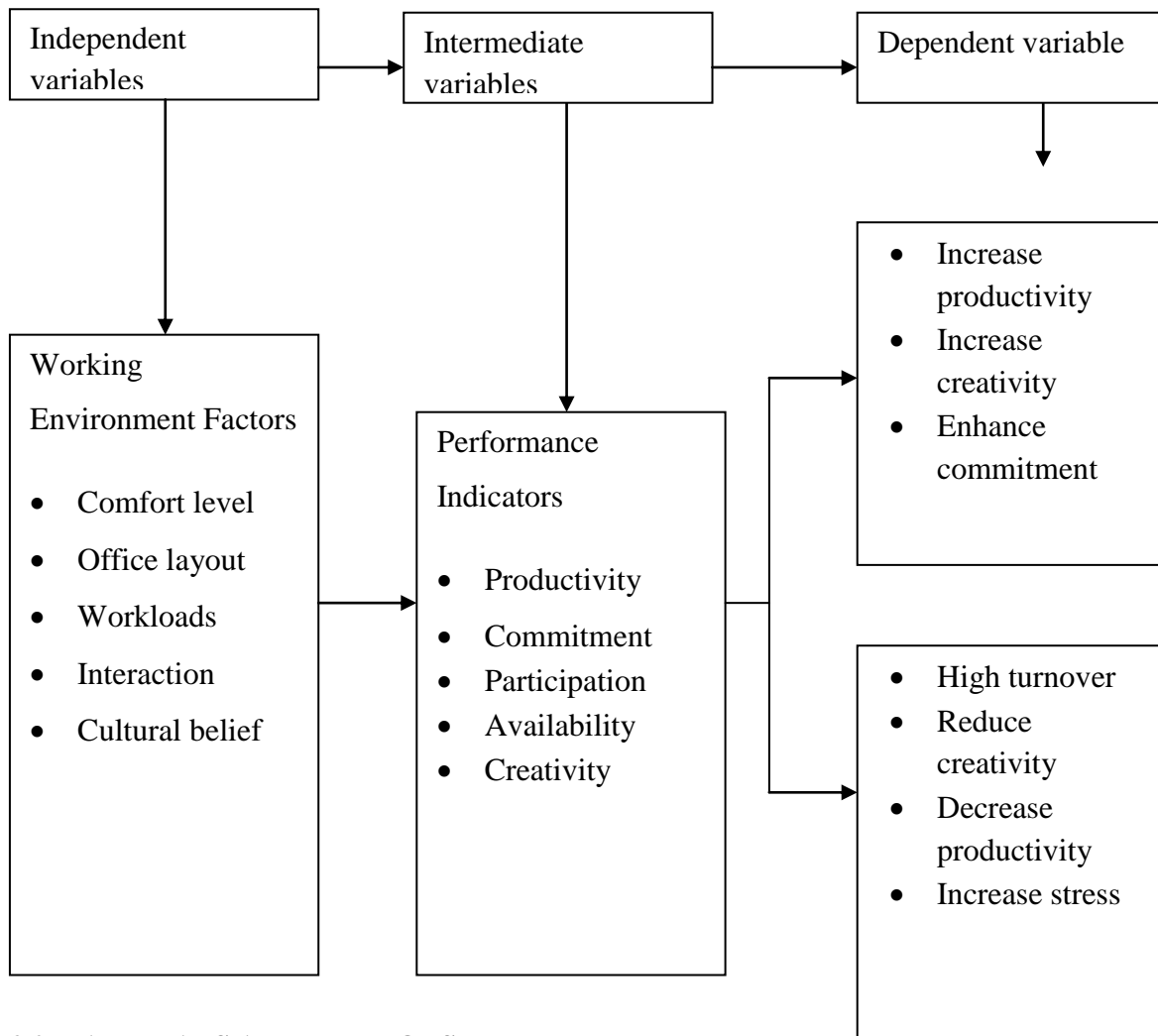
When good working environment are not provided, employees will respond negatively to their surroundings both physical and psychological. Physical discomfort will cause strain and mental fatigue which followed by low efficiency and high rate of absenteeism of employees. In extreme cases, the employees' physical well being may actual be hampered. A poor working environment often results in decrease level of production and low employee morale. Thus, an average of employee cannot work according to the expectation unless proper and adequate working facilities have provided to keep his mind and body healthy and vigorous (Alam *et al.*, 2020).

The work place environment in a majority of industry is unsafe and unhealthy. These include poorly designed workstations, unsuitable furniture, lack of ventilation, inappropriate lighting and lack of personal protective equipment. People working in such environment are prone to occupational disease and it impacts on employee's performance. Thus, productivity is decreased due to the working environment. So, it is difficult to provide facilities to increase their performance level (Rana *et al.*, 2021)

In Tanzania, especially in rural areas, very few researches have been done concerning the effect of working environment on the performance of the Village Executive Officer (VEO), hence this paper contributes on this knowledge gap.

### Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework, explains how working environment influences Village Executive Officers performance. It assumes that working environment consists of two components that are physical environment and behavior component. Physical environment comprises the comfort level (presence of office building and working tools) which influences VEO's productivity, commitment, creativity and participation. Also, there is an office layout (presence of privacy) which influences health workers productivity and competence. The behavior component of environment (how workers interact with each other) tends to influence productivity and responsiveness, and in totality they may increase or decrease VEO's performance.



**2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**2.1 Research design and sampling procedure**

The study concentrated on Village Executive Officers from four wards, Kalalela, Katete, Mkowe and Katapuro with the view of collecting necessary data. Survey design was applied on the research on the basis that the design allows collection of data on different groups of respondents at one point at a time. The design also has the greater degree accuracy and precious in social science study (Kothari, 2004), Data were gathered using interview method in which questionnaire tool was administered. Data types and sources involved both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected direct from the area of study through questionnaires and secondary data involved review of documents and reports, various publications and internet. Data collection methods and tools involved structured questionnaires whereby, documentary review employed both published and unpublished materials related to working environment and performance.

The sampling frame involved a list of 64 VEO’s in Kalambo District Council whereby a sampling unity selected were VEO’s from four wards which are Kalalela, Mkowe, Katapuro and Katete. According to Yamane, (1967) a sample size involves 39 VEOs from four wards.

$$\text{Sample size (n)} = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{64}{1+64(0.01)} = 39$$

Therefore, sample size = 39 respondents

Sampling procedures used was, simple random sampling to select respondents from the list of VEO's and each respondent had equal chance of being selected. Data gathered from the study area was edited to make suitable for analysis. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 software program was used to analyze data by using tables and figures.

### 3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

General characteristics that put into account were sex, age, marital status, education level, working experience and distribution of respondents. The study involved both male and female. Therefore, the study results show that 56.4% were Male and 43.6% were Female.

**Table 1: Reveals Sex of respondents**

Sex of respondents	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	22	56.4
Female	17	43.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Results depicts that, out of 39 respondents 46.2% were between 18-35 years, 33.3% were between 36-45 years, 15.4% were between 46-55 years and 5.1% were of 55 and above. The table 2 below illustrates age of respondents.

**Table 2: Reflects Age of respondents**

Age of respondents	Frequency	Percent (%)
18-35	18	46.2
36-45	13	33.3
46-55	6	15.4
55+	2	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The study also categorized marital status as single, married, separated and widow/widower. The study results show that out of 39 respondents about 25.6% were single and 74.4% were married.

**Table 3: Reflects Marital Status of Respondents**

Marital status of respondent	Frequency	Percent (%)
Single	10	25.6
Married	29	74.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The study assessed respondents in terms of education level that, found to vary from one respondent to another. The study results revealed that out of 39 respondents about 2.6% were primary, 17.9% were secondary and 79.5% were certificate.

**Table 4: Shows Education Level of Respondents**

Level of education of respondent	Frequency	Percent (%)
Primary	1	2.6
Secondary	7	17.9
Certificate	31	79.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The study results show that out of 39 respondents about 23.1% had 1-5 years of working experience, 25.6% had 6-10 years, 12.8% had 11-15 years and 38.5% had 15 and above years of experience. Table 5 below illustrate for working experience of respondents.

**Table 5: Reflects Working Experience of Respondents**

Years of experience	Frequency	Percent (%)
1-5	9	23.1
6-10	10	25.6
11-15	5	12.8
15+	15	38.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Distribution of respondents covered from four wards reflected 30.8% were from Kalaela, 28.2% were from Katete, 20.5% were from Mkowe and 20.5% were from Katapuro.

**Table 6: Reveals Distribution of Respondents**

Name of ward	Frequency	Percent (%)
Kalaela	12	30.8
Katete	11	28.2
Mkowe	8	20.5
Katapuro	8	20.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Working tools is one of the factors affecting majority workplace performance whereby, 26.5% of respondents said working tools/condition, 21.8% said office layout and comfort level, 11.6% said the existed working relationship, 4.1% said local government policies, 6.1% said low payments, 5.4% said workloads, 2.7% job security, 10.4% supervision, 5.4% workplace safety and 5.4% working hours.

**Table 7: Reveals Factors Affecting VEO's performance**

Factors Affecting VEO's Performance	Frequency	Percent (%)
Working tools/condition	39	26.5
Office layout and level of comfort ability	32	21.8
Worker's interaction/relationship	17	11.6
Local Government policies	6	4.1
Low Payments	9	6.1
Workloads	8	5.4
Job security	4	2.7
Supervision	16	10.4
Workplace safety	8	5.4
Working hours	8	5.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In terms of working environment the study revealed that, 27.4% of respondents lived in poor housing, 19.3% worked in uncomfortable office, 13.3% faced too much work, 10.4% faced with poor working tools, 9.6% faced poor transport, 9.6% faced poor sanitation, 6.7% faced poor health services, and 3.7% faced bad tradition believes.

This is also evidenced by Alam *et al.*, (2020), who found that most of employees in developing world, are under poor working environment like office building, working equipment, transport facilities, housing and conflicts influenced by factors like poor interpersonal relationships. The study done by Parida *et al.*, (2021), demonstrates that employees' performance can be ensured by improving physical and behavior aspects of environment which includes office space (building), transport facilities, salary and interaction through education.

**Table 8: Reflects Situation of VEO's Working Environment**

Working environment	Frequency	Percent (%)
Poor housing	37	27.4
Uncomfortable office	26	19.3
Poor working tools	14	10.4
Poor transport services	13	9.6
Bad traditional beliefs	5	3.7
Poor sanitation	13	9.6
Poor health services	9	6.7
Overwhelming workloads	18	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In case of VEOs' satisfaction towards working environment, study revealed that out of 39 respondents about 100% said "No", means that all of them were not satisfied with the prevailing working environment.

**Table 9: Reveals VEO's Satisfaction Towards Working Environment**

Respondent's satisfaction	Frequency	Percent (%)
No	39	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The following are the reasons as to why 39 respondents said were not satisfied with working environments. One of the reasons is presence of poor-quality offices, here 12.8% said had poor offices, 23.1% said are faced with poor social services, 15.4% faced bad traditional beliefs, 20.5% were paid low salary, 17.9% faced poor transport and 10.3% had poor housing.

**Table 10: Shows Reasons for not satisfied with working environment**

Reasons for not satisfied with working environment	Frequency	Percent (%)
Poor office	5	12.8
Poor social services	9	23.1
Bad traditional beliefs	6	15.4
Low payments	8	20.5
Poor transport	7	17.9
Poor housing	4	10.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In involvement of VEOs' productive activities, study results revealed that, 100% of respondents said "Yes", this indicates that most of them were involved in productive activities.

**Table 11: Depicts Involvement of VEO's in Productive Activities**

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	39	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

This study revealed that, 51.3% of respondents had low level of productivity, 43.6% had medium level and 5.1% had high level productivity. This study proved that even if VEO's are involved in productive activities but still there is low level of production due to the kind of environment in which they are living to perform such activities.

**Table 12: Depicts VEO's Level of Productivity**

Level of productivity	Frequency	Percent (%)
Low	20	51.3
Medium	17	43.6
High	2	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In terms of commitment, the study reflected that, 56.4% of respondents said to have a high level of commitment, 38.5% said medium level of commitment and 5.1% had low level commitment. Results show that VEO's need high level of commitment to work due to the situation of environment they work.

**Table 13: Reveals Required Level of VEO's Commitment**

Level of commitment	Frequency	Percent (%)
Low	2	5.1
Medium	15	38.5
High	22	56.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Level of VEO's responsiveness towards participation on various activities revealed that, 53.8% of respondents had high level of participation in various activities, 41.1% had medium level participation and 5.1% had low level participation. High level of participation is required in order to be able to have better performance, this concurs with Mikkelsen & Olsen (2019) who also concluded that high level of participation in various activities increases performance of the organization. Table 14 below illustrates VEO's level of responsiveness toward participation on various activities.

**Table 14: Level of Responsiveness Towards Participation on Various Activities**

Level of Responsiveness	Frequency	Percent (%)
Low	2	5.1
Medium	16	41.1
High	21	53.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Level of VEO's creativity to comply with existing working environments reflected that, 7.7% of respondents said had high level of creativity, 48.7% said had medium level of creativity and 43.6% had low level creativity. This showed how VEO's bad working environment reduces level of creativity in performing various activities. Table 15 below illustrates VEO's level of creativity to comply with existing working environment.

**Table 15: Shows VEO's Level of Creativity to Comply with Existing Working Environment**

VEO's Level of Creativity	Frequency	Percent (%)
Low	17	43.6
Medium	19	48.7
High	3	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In terms of the quality workplace the study revealed that, 76.9% of respondents had to be available at workplace in more than official working hours (overtime), this is because of unconducive working environment which needs more time than usual so as to complete their duties, 17.9% had to be available at workplace in official working hours and 5.1% had to be available below official working hours. This implies that due to the kind of environment that VEO's performs their duties they require more time to complete them. Table 16 below illustrates VEO's availability at workplace.

**Table 16: Depicts VEO's availability at workplace**

VEO's availability at workplace	Frequency	Percent (%)
Below official working hours	2	5.1
Official working hours	7	17.9
Overtime	30	76.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 17 below, shows authorities responsible for improving working environment for VEO's better performance in response towards involvement on productive activities.

In terms of which authority is responsible for improving working environment to VEOs the study revealed that, 87.1% of respondents said government, 10.9% said NGOs and 2.0% said other stakeholders such as CBOs. On the side of measures required to be taken to improve working environment for VEO's the study revealed that,

25.2% of respondents suggested building of enough and standard offices, 22.4% said building of enough houses, 15.0% said provision of transport facilities, 13.6% said provision of education to the community, 7.5% said construction of infrastructures, 6.1% said provision of training opportunities, 5.4% said establishment of risk assessment policy, 3.4% improvement of VEO's salary grades and 1.4% recognition and rewards.

**Table 17: Reflects Measures and Authorities Responsible for Improving working Environment for VEO's Better Performance**

Measure to improve working environment	Authorities responsible			Total
	Government	NGOs	Other stakeholder	
Building enough houses	19.0	2.7	0.7	22.4
Building of enough and standard office	21.8	2.7	0.7	25.2
Provision of transport facilities	13.6	0.7	0.7	15.0
Provision of education to the community	12.9	0.7	0.0	13.6
Provision of training opportunities	5.4	0.7	0.0	6.1
Construction of infrastructures	6.8	0.7	0.0	7.5
Recognition and rewards	0.7	0.7	0.0	1.4
Establishment of risk assessment policy	4.1	1.4	0.0	5.4
Improvement of VEO's salary grades	2.7	0.7	0.0	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>87.1</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 Conclusion

The findings revealed that, there is a significant relationship between performance of the Village Executive Officers (VEO'S) and the working environment elements; such as presence of good quality office building, availability of houses, availability of transport facilities and availability of working equipment. These findings indicates that the physical component of the work environment have the strongest effect on the performance level of employees.

Working environment impacts VEO's morale, productivity and engagement both positively and negatively. The working environment in majority of VEO's is unsafe and unhealthy. These include poor office buildings, unsuitable furniture, poor housing, insufficient safety measures in fire emergencies and lack of transport facilities. Such environment impacts on their level of motivation, level of creativity, level of commitment and it impacts on VEO's performance. Thus, productivity is decreased due to such poor working environment.

### 4.2 Recommendations

It is therefore, recommended that, Kalambo District Council Authority to;

- Provide good working environment to its employees, which is conducive in terms of facilities, equipments and better interaction opportunities.
- Take appropriate steps for providing better office building, house and sufficient working equipments to enable quality care at workplace, and
- Improve salary and allowances in order to motivate VEO's to work hard for better performance and hence rural development.

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