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INFLUENCE OF QUALITY CIRCLES ON LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY IN THE JUDICIAL SERVICE IN NYERI COUNTY

Peter Kuria Nguru[1], Dr. Joshua Ogutu Miluwi[2], Dr. Vivian Cherono vivian[3]
[1]*Kenya Methodist University*
[2]*Kenya Methodist University*
[3]*Kenya Methodist University*

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ABSTRACT

Labour productivity was an important factor in the success of a company. A company's output was as much dependent on labour productivity as it was on capital productivity. The study sought to examine the influence of quality circles on labour productivity in the judicial service in Nyeri County. The study adopted the descriptive design. The target population comprised 43 Magistrates, 93 Court Administrators, and 145 Lawyers (members of the Nyeri Law Society). Using 30% representation, a sample size of 13 Magistrates, 21 court administrators, and 44 Lawyers (members of the Nyeri Law Society) was utilized. The study used cluster random sampling to select 8 clusters, stratified sampling to identify the sample within each cluster, and simple random sampling to choose respondents from each stratum. It collected quantitative and qualitative data using questionnaires and interviews, then used statistical analysis to organize, summarize, and present the data. Quantitative data was analyzed with descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation) and presented in tables, graphs, and charts. The study demonstrates there is a very strong positive correlation between labour productivity in courts and quality circles, with a coefficient of 0.875 and a significance level of 0.000. This means that courts that implement quality circles tend to have higher levels of labour productivity The regression analysis shows that technology use significantly enhances productivity, with a one-unit increase resulting in a 0.265 standard deviation rise (Beta = 0.265, p = .026). The study recommended that the judicial service should improve the technology infrastructure to boost productivity and performance in the legal sector.

INTRODUCTION

Labour productivity in the judiciary service is crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 16 (World Bank, 2021). An effective and dependable judicial system is essential for foreign investment and economic development (World Bank Group, 2021). The National Center for State Courts has developed a framework for measuring court productivity (National Center for State Courts, 2022). In the UK, labour productivity in the judiciary service reduces waiting times for hearings (Ministry of Justice, 2022).

The concept of labour productivity in the judiciary service dates back to the 18th century (Lindert, 2004). Recent statistics show low productivity levels in many countries. In the USA, productivity in federal courts decreased by 3.4% in 2020 (Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, 2021). In other countries, capacity and resource constraints lead to significant backlogs, such as Pakistan's backlog of over 1.9 million cases (Dawn, 2022) and Nigeria's 40% productivity level in 2021 (Fleming, 2023). Kenya also struggles with a backlog of over 500,000 cases as of 2021 (The Standard, 2021). These low productivity levels hinder the provision of justice to citizens.

Quality circles in the Judiciary service aim to improve productivity, reduce backlogs, and enhance the quality of justice delivery by bringing together judiciary staff to identify and address inefficiencies (Chavan & Jadhav, 2020). These circles involve regular meetings, data analysis, and action planning to address issues such as reducing case processing times and improving court operations (Ismail et al., 2021). While quality circles are more commonly implemented in developed nations like the USA and the UK (Miller & Jones, 2022), their implementation in developing nations like those in Africa is still beneficial, particularly in improving communication and teamwork among employees (Ngowi et al., 2018).

The Kenyan judiciary faces challenges such as case backlogs, corruption, and insufficient resources, negatively impacting labour productivity. A report by the Judiciary of Kenya (2020) recommends a study to identify areas for improvement. Studies by the National Council for Law Reporting (2021) and World Bank (2018) highlight inefficiencies, delays, and corruption. In Nyeri County, a study by the Judiciary Transformation Framework (2021) found significant delays in case processing, while another study by the National Council on the Administration of Justice (2022) revealed high absenteeism among judicial officers, leading to further delays.

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Problem Statement

Labour productivity is crucial for a company's success, impacting output, capital productivity, and various costs. Improving labour productivity reduces the need for workers, resulting in lower labor costs. In Nyeri County, low labour productivity in the judicial service has significant implications. Delays in case processing have led to a backlog of cases, denying justice to many litigants and overcrowding remand facilities. High levels of absenteeism among judicial officers have eroded public trust in the judiciary, leading some to seek alternative dispute resolution methods. The need to investigate the factors behind low labour productivity in the county is essential. Quality circles have been found to influence labour productivity, but studies did not focus on the judicial service in Nyeri County. Therefore, a study is needed to examine the factors influencing labour productivity in magistrate courts in Nyeri County. This will help identify areas for improvement and enhance efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

Objective

The main objective is to determine the influence of quality circles on labour productivity in the judicial service in Nyeri County.

Research Hypotheses

H_{O4} Quality Circles do not have a statistically significant influence on labour productivity in the judicial service in Nyeri County

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality Circles and Labour Productivity

A study conducted in Malaysia by Hassan and Yusoff (2021) found that quality circles had a positive impact on labor productivity in the Malaysian judicial service, while a study by Ismail et al. (2021) found that quality circles were effective in improving productivity and job satisfaction among court employees. Another study in India by Chavan and Jadhav (2020) discovered that quality circles had a positive impact on labor productivity in the Indian judicial service, highlighting the importance of teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and employee involvement.

In India, a study by Kumar and Singh (2019) used a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews, to evaluate the effectiveness of quality circles. The indicators for the study were participation, communication, problem-solving, and continuous improvement. The study found that quality circles had a positive impact on employee engagement and productivity in the judicial service.

A review of studies on the impact of quality circles on labor productivity in the judicial service in South Africa, Nigeria, and Ghana found a positive correlation between quality circles and labor productivity. Molekoa and Mavhunga (2021) examined the dimensions of employee motivation, job satisfaction, and problem-solving and found a positive impact on labor productivity. Mlambo and Chinyamurindi (2018) identified employee motivation and participation as key factors in improving productivity, while Adegbite and Elegunde (2019) found that quality circles improved employee performance and productivity. Sakyi et al., (2021) discovered that quality circles had a positive impact on employee satisfaction and productivity. Overall, these studies suggest that implementing quality circles can be an effective strategy to improve labor productivity in the judicial service.

A study by Niyonkuru and Ngaruko (2019) in Rwanda and Ngowi et al. (2018) in Tanzania investigated the impact of quality circles on labor productivity in the judicial service. Both studies used mixed-methods approaches, including focus groups, interviews, surveys, and interviews, to assess the effectiveness of quality circles. The dimensions of quality circles included employee engagement, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and continuous improvement. The findings suggest that quality circles are effective in improving employee engagement and productivity, as well as motivating employees and enhancing job satisfaction.

Quality circles are small teams of volunteers that meet regularly to identify, analyze, and solve problems in their area of work, promoting quality, productivity, and continuous improvement (Sparrow et al., 2015). Effective quality circles require autonomy, training in problem-solving methods, and support from management (Thomas et al., 2010). To succeed, quality circles must be staffed by volunteers, have representatives from different functional activities, and choose their own problems to address (Montana & Bruce, 2008). Additionally, they require appropriate training, a self-selected leader, and a mentor from management who supports their efforts without managing them directly. By following these guidelines, quality circles can lead to improved labor productivity in the judicial service in Nyeri County.

In Kenya, a study (Miano & Mokaya, 2021) used a quantitative approach, including surveys and statistical analysis, to evaluate the impact of quality circles. The dimensions of quality circles may have included employee performance, productivity, job satisfaction, communication, and leadership. The study found that quality circles were effective in improving employee performance and productivity in the judicial service.

Labour Productivity in the Courts Models

In the United States, Dieterle (2021)'s examination of the productivity of judges in the federal courts found that increasing the number of judges could improve productivity and reduce the backlog of cases. In India, Kumar (2021) analyzed the factors affecting the productivity of judges and found that the use of technology could significantly improve the efficiency of the judiciary service. Similarly, a study conducted in 2022 in Canada examined the productivity of court clerks and found that providing training and resources could improve productivity and reduce errors (Smith, 2022). In South Africa Kriel (2022) found that providing language training and support could improve productivity of court interpreters and reduce delays.

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A study conducted by the American Bar Association (ABA) in 2020 found that the US judicial system had a backlog of over 400,000 cases, resulting in delays and increased costs (1). Similarly, a UK Ministry of Justice study in 2019 found that the average time taken to resolve cases in the UK had increased, leading to increased costs and reduced access to justice (2). In Malaysia, a study by the Malaysia Productivity Corporation (2018) found that the labour productivity of judges and court personnel was low compared to international benchmarks, recommending case management systems and more judges and court personnel (3). In India, a National Judicial Academy study in 2017 found that outdated case management processes and inadequate training led to low labour productivity among judges and court personnel, recommending technology adoption and regular training (4). These studies highlight the importance of adopting effective case management systems, technology, and training to improve labour productivity in the judicial service.

The labor productivity of judges and court personnel in Nyeri County can be improved by promoting diversity and representation in quality circles, fostering a culture of teamwork and collaboration, and streamlining decision-making processes. According to studies in South Africa (2016), Nigeria (2015), Ghana (2014), Rwanda (2013), and Tanzania (2017), labor productivity in the judicial service is affected by factors such as high caseloads, delays in appointments, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of training, human resources, innovation, and technology. To address these challenges, recommendations include recruiting more judges and court personnel, providing adequate infrastructure, and promoting a culture of teamwork and collaboration.

According to recent studies in Kenya, the labor productivity in the Judiciary Service is low due to a combination of factors, including a backlog of cases, lack of modern technology and infrastructure, and shortage of human resources (Otieno & Ongondo, 2022; Omondi et al., 2022; Kimani & Mwiti, 2022). The slow pace of trials and outdated case management systems contribute to inefficiencies in the delivery of justice, while the lack of sufficient judges, magistrates, and support staff leads to heavy workloads and burnout (Kimani & Mwiti, 2022). To improve labor productivity and efficiency in delivering justice, significant reforms and investment are needed in the sector.

The dimensions of labour productivity in the judicial service can be broadly categorized into three areas: efficiency, effectiveness, and quality. Efficiency refers to the ability of the judicial system to handle a large number of cases with minimal delay and cost. Effectiveness refers to the ability of the judicial system to deliver just and fair outcomes to litigants. Quality refers to the ability of the judicial system to produce well-reasoned, legally sound, and socially beneficial judgments.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the Human Capital Theory by Schultz (1961) and the Diffusion Innovation Theory as proposed by (Rogers, 2003).

Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI)

This study applied the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory to explore factors influencing labor productivity in the judicial service in Nyeri County, Kenya. DOI proposes that innovations spread through social systems over time, influenced by characteristics such as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (Rogers, 2003; Greenhalgh et al., 2004). The theory suggests that employees' perception of skills and qualifications of workers in the judicial service is influenced by these characteristics. By applying DOI, this study examined how employees perceive the skills and qualifications of workers and their compatibility with current work practices. The theory highlights the importance of communication channels, social networks, and leadership in facilitating technology adoption within organizational settings (Rogers, 2003).

DOI is highly relevant to this study's objectives. The theory provides a framework for understanding how new ideas or practices spread and are adopted within a social system. It offers insights into the factors influencing the rate and extent of adoption, including perceived relative advantage, compatibility, and complexity. By examining the various stages of innovation adoption, including awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption, DOI helps identify the factors that facilitate or impede the utilization of technology within the judicial service. This framework allows for a comprehensive analysis of how technological advancements are integrated into work processes, influencing labour productivity in Nyeri County's judicial service.

HRM Ability Motivation and Opportunity (AMO) Theory

The Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO) theory suggests that companies that hire individuals with ability and provide motivation and opportunity to perform well will outperform their competitors (Delery & Shaw, 2001). The theory proposes that organizational success is achieved when all three components are present: employee ability, motivation, and opportunity (Jiang et al., 2012). The AMO theory can be applied to the judicial service in Nyeri County to analyze how various factors influence labour productivity.

The study examines the impact of skills, qualifications, technology, employee motivation, and quality circles on labor productivity in the judicial service in Nyero County using the AMO theory. This framework analyzes how employees' abilities, motivation, and work environment opportunities influence their performance and productivity. The study can assess how quality circles in the judicial service provide opportunities for employees to perform effectively and efficiently, influencing their productivity.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design, which was chosen for its ability to comprehensively explore and describe the factors influencing labor productivity in the judicial service of Nyeri County. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), descriptive research involves fact-finding and inquiries that explain the current state of affairs. This design facilitated the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data, obtained through surveys and questionnaires, quantified factors such as the frequency and intensity of influences on productivity. Qualitative data, gathered via interviews and focus group discussions, provided deeper insights into the perceptions and experiences of judicial service workers regarding productivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The combination of these methods allowed for a holistic understanding of the productivity dynamics within the judicial service.

The target population of the study included magistrates, court administrators, and lawyers across various courts in Nyeri County. Magistrates, as key decision-makers in delivering justice, were crucial to assessing productivity. Court administrators played a pivotal role in ensuring efficient court operations, while lawyers' productivity was essential for the effective functioning of the justice system. The target population for this study, sourced from the County Government of Samburu (2023), encompasses a diverse group totaling 150,780 individuals. It includes local government officials (500), policy makers (30), project managers (180), communication teams (20), NGO representatives (50), and beneficiaries (150,000).

The research employed a stratified sampling technique to ensure a representative sample from each category of the target population. This method allowed for proportional representation of magistrates, court administrators, and lawyers based on their numbers in each court location. Cluster random sampling within each stratum further ensured that the sample accurately reflected the population diversity within Nyeri County's judicial service. the sample size comprised of 13 Magistrates, 21 court administrators, and 44 Lawyers (members of the Nyeri Law Society. The sample size of 80 respondents was determined based on the distribution across the courts and categories, ensuring adequate representation for robust data analysis (Orodho, 2003).

Reliability and validity were critical considerations in ensuring the robustness of the research instruments and the credibility of the study findings. Reliability, as defined by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), refers to the consistency and stability of results obtained from a research instrument over repeated trials. In this study, reliability was assessed through a pre-test of the questionnaire in Muranga regional courts, involving 20 sampled employees. The use of Cronbach's Alpha helped gauge internal consistency, with scores expected to exceed the recommended threshold of 0.7, as per Franklin (2012). This process ensured that the questionnaire reliably measured variables related to labor productivity in the judicial service of Nyeri County.

Validity, on the other hand, pertained to the extent to which the research instruments accurately measured the intended phenomena. Piloting the questionnaire in Muranga regional courts enabled the researcher to identify and modify items that did not effectively capture relevant information. These adjustments were crucial in enhancing the validity of the research tools, ensuring that they appropriately measured factors influencing labor productivity in the study context (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999; Orodho, 2005). By addressing reliability and validity concerns upfront, the study laid a strong foundation for conducting meaningful data analysis and drawing reliable conclusions.

In data analysis, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and systematically analyzed to derive meaningful insights. Quantitative data underwent descriptive statistical analysis, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. This approach facilitated the organization and presentation of data through graphs and tables, aiding in the interpretation of findings related to variables such as skills and qualifications of workers, technology usage, employee motivation, and quality circles. Additionally, Pearson Correlation and regression analyses were employed to explore relationships among these variables and their impact on labor productivity in the judicial service of Nyeri County. This comprehensive analytical approach, guided by Orodho (2005), ensured that the study's objectives were met effectively, providing a nuanced understanding of factors influencing labor productivity within ethical guidelines that safeguarded participant confidentiality and minimized potential risks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response Rate

The study achieved an average response rate of 86% across the target population, demonstrating high levels of participation from magistrates (77%), court administrators (86%), and lawyers (89%). These figures exceed the typical response rates observed in research, as suggested by Nulty (2008), indicating excellent engagement and cooperation from the respondents. Such robust participation enhances the validity and reliability of the survey findings, ensuring a representative sample for investigating the determinants of labour productivity in Nyeri County's judicial service.

Demographic Characteristics

Regarding demographic characteristics, the study revealed a balanced gender distribution among lawyers (48.7% male, 51.3% female) and court administrators (50% male, 50% female). Age distribution analysis indicated significant representation among lawyers aged 29-38 years (41.0%) and 39-48 years (51.3%), while court administrators predominantly fell within the 29-38 years (50.0%) and 39-48 years (44.4%) age categories. Educational attainment was notably high, with a majority holding a University Degree (Undergraduate) among both lawyers (64.1%) and court administrators (66.7%). These findings underscore a well-

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educated workforce within the judicial service, critical for understanding factors influencing labour productivity.

Awareness of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) among respondents

Furthermore, the study explored tenure and awareness of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) among respondents. It revealed that a significant proportion of lawyers (51.3% with 6-10 years) and court administrators (50.0% with 6-10 years) had served in their roles for 6-10 years. Moreover, a substantial majority were aware of HRIS applications (79.5% lawyers, 83.3% court administrators), indicating a high level of technological integration within the judicial service. This uniform adoption of ICT (100% in both categories) further highlights a technologically advanced environment, potentially impacting labour productivity positively.

The study's comprehensive analysis of demographic characteristics, including age, gender, educational attainment, tenure, and technological awareness among judicial service professionals in Nyeri County, provides a robust foundation for examining the determinants of labour productivity. These insights not only enhance the study's validity but also offer valuable considerations for improving organizational effectiveness within the judicial service context.

Quality Circles

Descriptive Statistics for Quality Circles: Lawyers Perspective

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect data from lawyers, with a mean score of 3.2564 on the statement "Our quality circles include members with diverse skills and expertise." This suggests that lawyers somewhat agreed that their quality circles are diverse in terms of skills and expertise. The standard deviation of 1.25064 indicates a high variation in responses, implying that some lawyers strongly agree while others disagree. This mixed view may affect the quality of decisions and solutions generated by the circles. This finding is consistent with Kimani and Oloko's (2021) study, which found that diversity of skills and expertise is a significant predictor of performance in Kenya's judicial system.

According to the respondents' opinions, the selection criteria for quality circle members are based on experience and knowledge of the judicial system, with a mean score of 3.4103 and a standard deviation of 1.18584. This suggests that lawyers have mixed views on the selection criteria, with some agreeing and others disagreeing. This is consistent with Mwihaki's (2019) finding that performance management in the Kenyan judiciary faces challenges such as unclear promotion criteria, inadequate feedback, and low employee involvement.

The third statement in the table reflects the respondents' opinions on the representation of different departments in the judicial service in the composition of their quality circles. The mean score of 3.2564 indicates that the lawyers were slightly above neutral on this statement, suggesting that they somewhat agreed that the composition of their quality circles included representatives from different departments in the judicial service. The standard deviation of 1.11728 shows that there was a moderate variation in the responses, implying that some respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while others disagreed or strongly disagreed. This result implies that the lawyers may have mixed views on the level of representation in their quality circles, and that they may perceive it as a factor that affects the communication and coordination among the circles and the departments. This result is consistent with the findings of Khamala (2022), who found that interdepartmental collabouration and teamwork were significant predictors of employee performance in the judicial service of Kitui County, Kenya.

The fourth statement in the table reflects the respondents' opinions on the diversity of backgrounds and experiences in the composition of their quality circles. The mean score of 3.5641 indicates that the lawyers were slightly above neutral on this statement, suggesting that they somewhat agreed that the composition of their quality circles included members from diverse backgrounds and experiences. The standard deviation of 0.88243 shows that there was a low variation in the responses, implying that most respondents had similar views on this statement. This result implies that the lawyers may be satisfied with the level of diversity in their quality circles, and that they may perceive it as a factor that enhances the creativity and innovation of the circles. This result is consistent with the findings of [Osewe and Gindicha (2021)], who reported that diversity of backgrounds and experiences was a significant predictor of employee satisfaction in the judiciary of Kenya.

The fifth statement in the table reflects the respondents' opinions on the frequency of meetings of their quality circles to discuss issues related to productivity in the judicial service. The mean score of 3.4359 indicates that the lawyers were slightly above neutral on this statement, suggesting that they somewhat agreed that their quality circles met regularly to discuss issues related to productivity in the judicial service. The standard deviation of 0.94018 shows that there was a low variation in the responses, implying that most respondents had similar views on this statement. This result implies that the lawyers may be satisfied with the frequency of meetings of their quality circles, and that they may perceive it as a factor that facilitates the identification and resolution of problems and challenges in the courts. This result is in line with the findings of Kimani and Oloko (2021), who reported that regular meetings were a significant predictor of performance in the judicial system of Kenya.

The sixth statement in the table reflects the respondents' opinions on the scheduling of meetings of their quality circles. The mean score of 3.4359 indicates that the lawyers were slightly above neutral on this statement, suggesting that they somewhat agreed that their quality circles had a fixed schedule for meetings. The standard deviation of 1.02070 shows that there was a moderate

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variation in the responses, implying that some respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while others disagreed or strongly disagreed. This result implies that the lawyers may have mixed views on the scheduling of meetings of their quality circles, and that they may not perceive it as a consistent or convenient process. This result is contrary to the findings of Mwihaki (2019), who observed that performance management in the Kenyan judiciary was faced with challenges such as lack of clear timelines, inadequate resources, and competing priorities.

The seventh statement in the table reflects the respondents' opinions on the follow-up system of their quality circles to ensure the implementation of decisions made during meetings. The mean score of 3.4103 indicates that the lawyers were slightly above neutral on this statement, suggesting that they somewhat agreed that their quality circles had a system in place to follow up on the implementation of decisions made during meetings. The standard deviation of 1.09347 shows that there was a moderate variation in the responses, implying that some respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while others disagreed or strongly disagreed. This result implies that the lawyers may have mixed views on the follow-up system of their quality circles, and that they may not perceive it as a reliable or effective process. This result is consistent with the findings of Khamala (2022), who found that a follow-up system was a significant predictor of employee performance in the judicial service of Kitui County, Kenya.

The highest mean score was for the statement "Our quality circles include members from diverse backgrounds and experiences" (3.5641), indicating that the respondents valued the diversity of their quality circle members. The lowest mean score was for the statement "Decisions made by our quality circles are based on consensus among members" (3.3077), implying that the respondents felt that there was room for improvement in the decision making process of quality circles.

The results imply that quality circles have a positive influence on labour productivity in the judicial service in Nyeri County, as they foster a culture of teamwork, problem solving, and continuous improvement among employees. Quality circles also enhance the communication, coordination, and cooperation among different departments and levels of the judicial service, which can improve the quality and efficiency of service delivery. The results are consistent with the findings of Heshmati and Rashidghalam (2018), who analysed labour productivity and its determinants in the manufacturing and service sectors in Kenya. They found that training and education were associated with higher labour productivity, and that a higher female share in the labour force reduced labour productivity. They also found that reliance on technologies such as emails and websites for communication had a positive but insignificant impact on firms' labour productivity.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Quality Circles: Lawyers Perspective

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
The composition of our quality circles is diverse in terms of skills and expertise.	39	1.00	5.00	3.2564	1.25064
Members of our quality circles are selected based on their experience and knowledge of the judicial system.	39	1.00	5.00	3.4103	1.18584
The composition of our quality circles includes representatives from different departments in the judicial service.	39	1.00	5.00	3.2564	1.11728
Our quality circles include members from diverse backgrounds and experiences.	39	1.00	5.00	3.5641	.88243
Our quality circles meet regularly to discuss issues related to productivity in the judicial service.	39	1.00	5.00	3.4359	.94018
Our quality circles have a fixed schedule for meetings.	39	1.00	5.00	3.4359	1.02070
Our quality circles have a system in place to follow up on the implementation of decisions made during meetings.	39	1.00	5.00	3.4103	1.09347
Decisions made by our quality circles are based on consensus among members.	39	1.00	5.00	3.3077	1.21728
Q2: Our quality circles have a well-defined process for decision making.	39	1.00	5.00	3.5385	1.09655
embers of our quality circles are encouraged to express their opinions freely during decision making.	39	1.00	5.00	3.3333	1.10818
Our quality circles have a system in place to monitor the implementation of decisions made	39	1.00	5.00	3.4103	1.06914
Valid N (listwise)	39				

Quality Circles: Court Administrators' Perspective

The results in Table 2 show that the lawyers generally had positive perceptions of quality circles, as the mean scores for all statements were above the midpoint of 3. However, the standard deviations indicate that there was considerable variation in the responses, suggesting that some lawyers were more convinced of the importance of quality circles than others. The highest mean score was for the statement "I believe that regular quality circle meetings are an important determinant of productivity in the courts" (3.5000), indicating that the lawyers recognized the value of frequent communication and collabouration among quality circle members. The lowest mean score was for the statement "I believe that involving judges and personnel in the decision-making process of quality circles is an important determinant of

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productivity in the courts" (3.2778), implying that the lawyers felt that there was a need for more participation and empowerment of the judicial staff in the quality circle decisions.

The results imply that quality circles have a positive influence on labour productivity in the courts in Nyeri County, as they create a culture of teamwork, problem solving, and continuous improvement among the lawyers and the judicial staff. Quality circles also foster the communication, coordination, and cooperation among different actors and levels of the judicial service, which can improve the quality and efficiency of service delivery. The results are in line with the findings of Mwangi (2021), who conducted a case study of quality circles in the High Court of Kenya. They found that quality circles improved the performance and productivity of the court staff, reduced the backlog of cases, enhanced the customer satisfaction, and increased the staff morale and motivation.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Quality Circles: Lawyers Perspective

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
I believe that having diverse and well-represented quality circles is an important determinant of productivity in the courts.	18	1.00	5.00	3.2778	1.60167
I believe that regular quality circle meetings are an important determinant of productivity in the courts.	18	1.00	5.00	3.5000	1.46528
I believe that involving judges and personnel in the decision-making process of quality circles is an important determinant of productivity in the courts.	18	1.00	5.00	3.2778	1.48742
Valid N (listwise)	18				

Labour Productivity in the Judicial Service: Lawyers' Perspective

The study explored perceptions of 39 respondents regarding labour productivity in the judicial service in Nyeri County, Kenya. The results, as depicted in Table 3, shed light on various aspects of the judicial service, indicating the following implications.

The backlog of cases in the judicial service is a significant problem. The mean score for this statement is 2.9487, which is close to the neutral point of 3. This indicates that the respondents have mixed opinions on whether the backlog of cases in the judicial service is a significant problem. The standard deviation of 0.91619 shows that, there is a moderate variation in the responses. Some respondents may strongly agree or disagree with the statement, while others may be indifferent or unsure. The result implies that the judicial service in Nyeri County may have a backlog of cases, but the extent and severity of the problem may vary depending on the type, nature, and complexity of the cases, as well as the availability and capacity of the judges and personnel. The result also suggests that the respondents may have different expectations and standards of what constitutes a significant problem in terms of the backlog of cases.

A related study in Kenya is the one by Khamala and Makhamara (2022), who investigated the influence of work-life balance on judicial service employees' performance in Kitui County, Kenya. They found that the backlog of cases was one of the factors that contributed to stress at work, which in turn affected the employees' performance and productivity. They recommended that the judicial service should adopt flexible work schedule strategies to reduce the workload and improve the work-life balance of the employees.

The backlog of cases in the judicial service has a negative impact on the efficiency of the courts. The mean score for this statement is 3.0000, which is exactly the neutral point of 3. This indicates that the respondents have no clear agreement or disagreement on whether the backlog of cases in the judicial service has a negative impact on the efficiency of the courts. The standard deviation of 1.16980 shows that there is a high variation in the responses. Some respondents may strongly agree or disagree with the statement, while others may be neutral or ambivalent. The result implies that the judicial service in Nyeri County may face some challenges in delivering timely and effective justice due to the backlog of cases, but the impact may not be uniform or significant across all courts. The result also suggests that the respondents may have different definitions and measures of what constitutes efficiency in the courts. A related study in Kenya is the one by Mwenda and Mwenda (2020), who examined the factors affecting the efficiency of the judiciary in Kenya. They found that the backlog of cases was one of the major factors that hindered the efficiency of the judiciary, as it caused delays, congestion, and dissatisfaction among the litigants and the public. They recommended that the judiciary should adopt alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, case management systems, and performance management systems to reduce the backlog and improve the efficiency of the courts.

Negative Impact of Backlog on Efficiency and Quality: Respondents perceived the backlog to negatively affect both the efficiency (Mean = 3.0000) and the quality of judgments produced (Mean = 2.8205). These results underline the interconnectedness of efficiency and case backlog, emphasizing the need for streamlined processes. Ayub's (2022) study on employee performance and motivation in the Kenyan county assembly provides insights into potential factors influencing judicial productivity.

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Reasonableness of Cases Handled per Judge/Personnel: While participants found the number of cases handled per judge/personnel reasonable (Mean = 3.0256), this might indicate an acceptance of the workload. However, the standard deviation suggests variations in opinions, indicating diverse perspectives on an acceptable caseload. This resonates with Kemboi's (2022) examination of case backlog and productivity factors in Kenya's judiciary. Participants expressed varied views on the manageability of judges/personnel workload (Mean = 2.7949), reflecting uncertainties about the balance between the workload and available resources. This complexity in workload management is consistent with findings in Mureithi's (2020) study on the challenges facing the Kenyan judiciary.

Respondents generally perceived the quality of judgments as high (Mean = 3.2051), with consistency across all courts (Mean = 3.0256). These positive ratings suggest that, despite challenges, the judicial service maintains a commendable standard of judgment quality. Such insights resonate with Kemboi's (2021) study, emphasizing the importance of quality judgments in addressing backlog issues. Delays in the judicial service were acknowledged as a significant problem (Mean = 3.0769), negatively impacting productivity (Mean = 2.9231) and the quality of judgments produced (Mean = 3.1538). These findings correlate with studies emphasizing the detrimental effects of delays on overall judicial performance, such as Mureithi (2020) and Ayub (2022). Participants acknowledged a well-established system for monitoring and addressing delays (Mean = 3.0256), indicating an awareness of the need for proactive measures. However, the standard deviation suggests variations in confidence regarding the effectiveness of the existing system. These results highlight the multifaceted challenges faced by the Nyeri County judicial service, providing valuable insights for targeted interventions. The linkages to related studies underscore the complexity of factors influencing judicial productivity, offering a basis for informed policy decisions and improvements within the Kenyan judicial system.

Table 3: Labour Productivity in the Judicial Service: Lawyers' Perspective

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
The backlog of cases in the judicial service is a significant problem.	39	1.00	5.00	2.95	0.92
The backlog of cases in the judicial service has a negative impact on the efficiency of the courts.	39	1.00	5.00	3.00	1.17
The backlog of cases in the judicial service has a negative impact on the quality of judgments produced.	39	1.00	5.00	2.82	1.19
The number of cases handled per judge/personnel in the judicial service is reasonable.	39	1.00	5.00	3.03	1.16
The workload of judges/personnel in the judicial service is manageable.	39	1.00	5.00	2.79	1.06
The quality of judgments produced by the judicial service is high.	39	1.00	5.00	3.21	0.89
The judicial service has a well-established system for ensuring the quality of judgments produced.	39	1.00	5.00	3.05	0.94
The quality of judgments produced by the judicial service is consistent across all courts.	39	1.00	5.00	3.03	1.01
Delays in the judicial service are a significant problem.	39	1.00	5.00	3.08	1.06
Delays in the judicial service have a negative impact on productivity.	39	1.00	5.00	2.92	1.16
Delays in the judicial service have a negative impact on the quality of judgments produced.	39	1.00	5.00	3.15	1.14
The judicial service has a well-established system for monitoring and addressing delays.	39	1.00	5.00	3.03	1.06
Valid N (listwise)	0				

Labour Productivity in the Judicial Service: County Administrators' Perspective

The study investigated the perceptions of 18 county administrators in Nyeri County, Kenya, regarding labour productivity in the judicial service, using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The results from Table 3 revealed valuable insights into various aspects of labour productivity. The results were as provided below. Consistently striving to meet and exceed customer expectations: With a mean score of 2.2222, administrators displayed a moderate inclination towards meeting and exceeding customer expectations. The standard deviation of .94281 indicates a considerable variability in responses. This suggests a need for more consistent efforts in aligning service delivery with customer expectations. The findings resonate with a study by Kamau (2021) that emphasizes the importance of customer-centric approaches in enhancing organizational performance within Kenyan public institutions.

The mean score of 2.2778 suggests a moderate level of satisfaction among customers with the service provided by administrators. The wide standard deviation of 1.01782 indicates varying degrees of satisfaction. This calls for a closer examination of the factors influencing customer satisfaction. The results align with findings from a study by Nyaga (2020), which emphasizes the need to prioritize customer satisfaction for improved organizational performance in Kenyan public service. Administrators scored an average of 2.1667, reflecting a moderate agreement in their effective problem-solving skills. The standard

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deviation of .92355 indicates moderate variability in perceptions. Enhancing problem-solving skills could contribute to more efficient issue resolution. This finding aligns with a study by Ouma (2022), emphasizing the significance of effective problem-solving in organizational efficiency within the Kenyan public sector.

Administrators scored an average of 2.3889, indicating a moderate agreement in consistently identifying and addressing problems promptly. The standard deviation of .91644 suggests variations in perceptions. To improve overall efficiency, a more concerted effort may be needed. This result correlates with a study by Wanjiru (2021), highlighting the importance of proactive problem identification and timely resolution for organizational effectiveness in Kenyan public institutions. With a mean score of 2.4444, administrators moderately perceived that staff manage tasks effectively to meet deadlines. The standard deviation of 1.14903 indicates a considerable range in opinions, emphasizing the need for a more uniform approach. This aligns with a study by Mutua (2023), emphasizing the critical role of effective task management in achieving organizational goals within the Kenyan public service.

Administrators indicated an average score of 2.1667, suggesting a moderate level of agreement regarding staff's excellent time management skills. The standard deviation of 1.20049 indicates varied opinions, indicating the need for a more consistent approach to time management. This finding resonates with a study by Karanja (2022), emphasizing the importance of time management in enhancing productivity within Kenyan public organizations. These results collectively indicate a need for targeted interventions to improve various aspects of labour productivity in the judicial service, ranging from customer satisfaction to staff task management. By addressing these areas, Nyeri County's judicial service can potentially enhance its overall efficiency and organizational performance.

Table 4: Labour Productivity in the Judicial Service: County Administrators' Perspective

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
I consistently strive to meet and exceed customer expectations.	18	1.00	4.00	2.22	0.94
Customers are highly satisfied with the level of service provided by me	18	1.00	5.00	2.28	1.02
I have been able to demonstrate effective problem-solving skills to resolve issues efficiently.	18	1.00	4.00	2.17	0.92
I am able to consistently identify and address problems in a timely manner.	18	1.00	4.00	2.39	0.92
The staff effectively manages their tasks and responsibilities to meet deadlines.	18	1.00	5.00	2.44	1.15
The staff consistently demonstrates excellent time management skills in handling their workload.	18	1.00	5.00	2.17	1.20
Valid N (listwise)	18				

Correlations

The table demonstrates that there is a very strong positive correlation between labour productivity in courts and quality circles, with a coefficient of 0.875 and a significance level of 0.000. This means that courts that implement quality circles tend to have higher levels of labour productivity, and vice versa. Quality circles are a management strategy that involves groups of workers who meet regularly to identify and solve problems related to their work. This result is compatible with a study Kariuki & Waiganjo (2017) that indicates that quality circles can improve productivity by enhancing the communication, collabouration, and innovation of workers.

Table 5: Correlations

		Labour Productivity in Courts
Quality Circles	Pearson Correlation	.875**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	39
Labour Productivity in Courts	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	39

Regression Analysis

The presented regression analysis examines the impact of Quality Circles on Labour Productivity in Courts. The Model Summary table indicates a very strong correlation between Quality Circles and Labour Productivity in Courts, with an R value of .930. This suggests that 86.4% (R Square = .864) of the variability in Labour Productivity can be explained by Quality Circles. The Adjusted R Square value of .861, which adjusts for the number of predictors in the model, confirms the model's robustness. The high R Square value signifies that the model explains a substantial portion of the variance in Labour Productivity, indicating a strong relationship between these variables

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Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.930[a]	.864	.861	.34120

a. Predictors: (Constant), Quality Circles

The ANOVA results further support this by showing the overall model fit is highly significant. The ANOVA table shows that the regression model is highly significant (Sig. = .000), indicating that Quality Circles significantly predict Labour Productivity in Courts. The F-statistic value of 235.667 is very high, suggesting that the model explains a significant portion of the variance in Labour Productivity.

Table 7: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27.436	1	27.436	235.667	.000[b]
	Residual	4.307	37	.116		
	Total	31.744	38			

a. Dependent Variable: Labour Productivity in Courts
b. Predictors: (Constant), Quality Circles

The Coefficients table provides insights into the individual contributions of the predictors to the model. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for Quality Circles is .897, indicating that for each unit increase in Quality Circles, Labour Productivity in Courts increases by .897 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of .930 signifies the strength of the relationship. The t-value of 15.351 and a significance level (Sig.) of .000 highlight that the contribution of Quality Circles to the model is statistically significant. The coefficient for Quality Circles indicates a positive and significant impact on Labour Productivity. This suggests that implementing or enhancing Quality Circles in court environments could lead to notable improvements in productivity. Given the high t-value and low significance level, we can be confident in the reliability of these findings.

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.400	.175		2.291	.028
	Quality Circles	.897	.058	.930	15.351	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Labour Productivity in Courts

H_{O4} (Quality Circles): The beta coefficient for Quality Circles is 0.897 with a high p-value of 0.000. This failure to reject H_{O4} indicates that Quality Circles do not have a statistically significant influence on labour productivity in the judicial service in Nyeri County within the context of this model.

Conclusions

The study examines the impact of quality circles on labour productivity in the judicial service in Nyeri County, Kenya, and concludess the varied views and experiences of lawyers and court administrators regarding the diversity, frequency, and decision-making of quality circles in the courts. The study shows that lawyers have positive perceptions of diversity and frequency, but mixed opinions on scheduling and follow-up systems, while court administrators have positive perceptions of all aspects, but with varying degrees of agreement. The study also finds that quality circles foster a positive work culture, and have a statistically significant influence on labour productivity in the judicial service of Nyeri County.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following are recommendations for the study.

i. Promote diversity and representation in quality circles: The study found that the highest mean score was for the statement "Our quality circles include members from diverse backgrounds and experiences" (3.5641). This suggests that lawyers value diversity in their quality circles. To build on this, the study recommends promoting diversity and representation in quality circles by ensuring that members come from different departments, levels, and backgrounds. This can lead to more innovative and effective solutions to challenges faced by the judicial service.

ii. The study found that quality circles have a positive influence on labor productivity in the judicial service. To build on this, the study recommends fostering a culture of teamwork and collaboration among employees by encouraging regular communication, problem-solving, and continuous improvement. This can be achieved through

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regular training sessions, team-building activities, and recognition of employees' contributions.

iii. The study found that decisions made by quality circles are not always based on consensus among members. To address this, the study recommends streamlining decision-making processes by establishing clear guidelines and procedures for decision-making. This can involve setting clear goals and objectives, establishing a clear decision-making hierarchy, and providing training on effective decision-making strategies.

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