

Downsizing has been widely used by many organizations as an effective method of reducing employment cost and improving efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. The Civil Service in Kenya is no exception. This study, therefore, attempts to assess the effects of downsizing on organizational performance of the Civil Service in Kenya.

Between 1963 and 1991, the Kenya Civil Service expanded both in functions and staff strength. This rapid civil service growth, which reduced the civil servants' population's ratio from 1:133 in 1963 to 1:85 in 1992 coupled with low economic growth and high population growth rate has had a negative impact on service delivery and overall government ability in provision of improved standards of living to its citizens. This became a concern to the government and led to the launching of the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRP) phase I in August 1993. The focus of this programme was cost containment through staff downsizing measure as one of the strategies for improving efficiency and productivity in the Civil Service. In 1998, the phase II of the programme was launched. The overall goal of the phase II of the CSRP was to improve the performance of the civil service through downsizing. By the year 2000, quite a number of the civil servants had left the civil service through CSRP. The general objective of this study was to assess the effects of downsizing on Civil Service performance. The specific objectives of the study were fivefold. These were (a) to find out the extent to which downsizing has affected efficiency and effectiveness in the civil service; (b) to assess the degree of performance in the service; (c) to find out the extent to which working conditions in the Civil Service have improved; (d) to find out the problems caused by downsizing in the Civil Service; and (e) to find out the benefits of downsizing to the Civil Service. The study covered a review of the writings of other researchers on downsizing giving their contributions and limitations. The literature review concentrated on six areas. The first area is a discussion on the background of downsizing. Specifically, it included the concept of lean organizations and the emergence of downsizing. Second area covered the consequences of downsizing. Thirdly, the review focused on lessons learned from downsizing. Fourthly, the review highlighted some recommendations concerning the downsizing process. Fifthly, the review gives some alternatives to downsizing. Finally, the review stated some of the limitations of the various writers on downsizing.

This study was conducted in five Government Ministries in Nairobi namely, Agriculture, Health, Education, Local Government and Home Affairs. From a total population of approximately 1195, employees (Ministries' Database, 2006), a sample size of 243 was selected through stratified random sampling. In order to establish the effects of downsizing on Civil Service performance, it was important to obtain the feelings of the retained staff on the relevance and impact of downsizing programme on them. This was due to the fact that downsizing programme entailed operationalization of voluntary early retirement scheme, retrenchment, freeze on recruitment except in critical and essential services, withdrawal of guaranteed employment to university and pre-service training graduates, strict enforcement of the mandatory retirement age of 55 years and payroll cleansing. Under this programme since its inception in 1993, the number of civil servants was reduced by over 43% from 274,000 in 1993 to 118,433 by the year 2005 (Office of the President -DPM, January 2006:Pay Policy for the Public Service). The data collection methods included questionnaires, which, was the main method, interviews and observation. The questionnaires were self administered because the survey was confined to five Government Ministry headquarters situated in Nairobi. The researcher being a resident in Nairobi found it easier to reach the respondents. The main advantage of this is that the researcher could collect all the completed responses within a short period. A

total of 243 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Out of these, 122 questionnaires were returned duly completed by the respondents.

Interviews and observation could also be done easily. The main advantage of interview method was that the researcher was able establish rapport and motivate respondents. The data was also obtained through observation of events as they normally occur and through reference to relevant documents. After data collection, the researcher carried out both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Six themes or key issues were considered in the quantitative analysis. These were; the work planning process in the Civil Service, professional and technical competences, managerial competences, resource management and accountability, and working conditions for retained Civil Servants. From the analysis, it was established that Civil Servants were not happy with the implementation of downsizing programme. Work planning process is still poor in the Civil Service. Technical, professional and managerial competences have improved slightly. The working conditions have also not improved. From the findings, downsizing has therefore not improved performance in the Civil Service. It was recommended among others that employees should be properly sensitized before any change affecting them like downsizing is made. Downsizing should also be gradual to enable affected employees to be properly prepared. Proper evaluation process must be put in place to ensure that the right number of employees is laid off and that essential employees are retained.