Effects of Customer Focus on the Employee Performance of Chloride Exide in Kenya

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DOI: <u>https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15213161</u>

Published Date: 03-April-2025

Abstract: This study investigates the influence of customer focus, a core principle of Total Quality Management (TQM), on employee performance at Chloride Exide Ltd in Kenya. The problem identified was the limited understanding of how customer-centric strategies impact internal performance metrics in Kenyan organizations. The study's objective was to determine whether customer focus, as practiced within TQM frameworks, positively influences employee performance. A descriptive and causal research design was employed, with data collected from 172 employees using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. While descriptive findings showed strong agreement that customer focus enhances performance (mean = 4.07), inferential analysis revealed a negative but statistically insignificant relationship. The study concludes that while customer focus may improve perceived employee performance, it does not significantly affect measurable outcomes. Recommendations include exploring intervening variables such as job satisfaction and organizational culture. These findings contribute to the growing discourse on TQM's internal impact in developing economies.

Keywords: Chloride Exide Kenya; Customer Focus; Employee Performance; Organizational Improvement; Service Quality; Total Quality Management (TQM).

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Total Quality Management (TQM) has emerged as a pivotal strategy for enhancing organizational performance through continuous quality improvement. As noted by Saihu [1], TQM emphasizes the collective involvement of all organizational members in an ongoing effort to enhance the quality of products and services. Globally recognized and widely implemented, TQM is deeply rooted in the Japanese concept of Kaizen, meaning "continuous improvement" [2]. Japan's longstanding commitment to TQM has significantly elevated the quality of its manufacturing sector, positioning the country as a global leader in industrial excellence.

One of the core principles of TQM is a strong customer focus. Ali [3] asserts that customer satisfaction must be at the forefront of any quality management strategy. This perspective is reinforced by Agus and Hassan [4], who emphasize that effective TQM implementation hinges on strategies designed specifically to meet and exceed customer expectations. According to Sallis [5], customer-centric TQM practices enhance value through the continual refinement of organizational processes. Oakland [6] further argues that TQM is inherently people-focused, aiming to improve customer satisfaction while concurrently reducing costs.

Beyond being a management system, TQM fosters a cultural shift within organizations. As Dahlgaard-Park [7] articulates, TQM embodies a company-wide culture where all employees are engaged in sustained efforts to deliver superior customer value. Quality, in this context, is ultimately defined by the customer [6], making their feedback and satisfaction crucial indicators of success. As such, employee training and empowerment become essential components of any TQM initiative.

Understanding the relationship between TQM and employee performance is particularly significant for organizations like Chloride Exide, which seek to leverage quality management practices to boost productivity and long-term profitability. TQM encourages not only procedural improvements but also a deeper engagement of employees in the pursuit of excellence. However, the success of TQM largely depends on the extent of employee involvement and their commitment to quality enhancement. While Daqar and Constantinovits [8] caution that high employee performance does not automatically translate into successful TQM, Jawoosh [9] contends that maximizing individual performance is essential to realizing TQM objectives. Ultimately, employee performance remains a critical driver of the overall effectiveness of TQM strategies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Scientific Management Theory

The foundation of Scientific Management Theory, originally known as Taylorism, was laid by Frederick Winslow Taylor in the late 19th century. Central to this theory is the assertion that organizational productivity can be significantly improved through the application of scientific methods and the establishment of standardized procedures for task execution [10]. Taylor emphasized the importance of systematic task management through careful selection, training, and supervision of workers to drive efficiency and output.

The theory is grounded in four core principles, the first of which advocates for the standardization of work processes using scientific methods. This ensures that tasks are performed in the most efficient way possible. However, while Taylor championed operational harmony, critics like Awofeso [11] argue that his model overlooked the need for formal organizational structures in favor of interpersonal harmony, which may not always translate into tangible effectiveness. Nonetheless, Al Majali [12] underscores the relevance of having clearly defined operational frameworks to guide both management and employees toward collective efficiency. This principle closely aligns with the current study's focus on employee involvement, highlighting the need for synchronized efforts between management and staff in achieving operational excellence.

The second principle stresses the clear allocation of roles and responsibilities within the organization. This not only enhances operational clarity but also serves as a motivational tool by linking employee compensation to their level of output [13]. According to Scott et al. [14], employees function more effectively when their duties are clearly articulated and when they receive ongoing guidance from their supervisors. Yet, Smit et al. [15] caution that while the scientific approach aims to define the essential units of work, it may inadvertently exclude certain employee contributions. This presents a critical point of reflection in the study, as it underscores the necessity of having a comprehensive structure for employee involvement that ensures inclusivity and participation across all levels.

A further dimension of the theory is its emphasis on establishing a clear hierarchy, where employee performance is monitored and optimized through training, planning, and performance-based incentives [16]. However, Uddin and Hossain [17] critique this view for downplaying the importance of structural frameworks, arguing that efficiency stems from a balance between human elements and organizational systems. In this regard, the theory's application in the current study is linked to the role of top management support, particularly in balancing strategic oversight with active employee engagement to foster overall organizational effectiveness.

B. Empirical Review

The principle of customer focus stands as a cornerstone of TQM, emphasizing the centrality of customer satisfaction and retention in driving organizational success. According to Adza-Awude [18], customer focus plays a critical role in the effective implementation of TQM practices. His study identified four key objectives that define customer-centric quality initiatives: achieving customer satisfaction, outperforming competitors, ensuring long-term customer retention, and expanding market share. While this research emphasized the strategic importance of customer focus in TQM adoption, the present study shifts the lens to explore how customer-oriented practices influence employee performance, particularly in the context of Chloride Exide Kenya.

Similarly, Yaacob [19] conducted an empirical investigation involving 205 managers in Malaysia's public service sector to assess how customer focus affects organizational performance. The study applied random sampling techniques, targeting managers directly engaged in customer service processes. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that customer focus significantly enhances not only customer satisfaction but also employee productivity and innovation. Notably, the impact on innovation was found to be mediated by employee satisfaction, suggesting that the effectiveness of customer focus is

closely tied to the internal work environment. The current study builds upon this insight by applying multiple regression analysis to assess the influence of customer focus across various management levels at Chloride Exide Kenya, with a specific focus on how it shapes employee performance outcomes.

In a related context, Mohammed et al. [20] examined customer focus as a key TQM variable in Saudi Arabia's largest telecommunications firm. Using a dataset comprising responses from 421 employees, the study employed regression analysis to determine the relationship between six TQM practices and operational performance. The findings indicated a robust correlation between customer focus and improved company performance. While Mohammed et al. concentrated on operational outcomes, the current research investigates the interplay between TQM practices and employee performance, offering a more granular analysis of how customer-centric strategies translate into workplace outcomes within Chloride Exide's Kenyan operations.

The current study further incorporates data from 30 employees across different hierarchical levels within Chloride Exide. Using SPSS-based multiple regression analysis, the research seeks to determine how the firm's customer orientation influences employee performance. A well-structured management system is expected to place significant emphasis on identifying customer expectations and converting them into specific, actionable product and service standards. In line with this, organizations must strive not only to meet but to exceed customer expectations, recognizing that elevated levels of customer satisfaction can lead to enhanced internal performance metrics, particularly among employees.

Expanding the scope, Nguyen and Nagase [21] used a quantitative research design involving self-administered questionnaires to analyze the influence of TQM on customer satisfaction. Their findings demonstrated a significant association between TQM practices and perceived service quality, which directly impacted customer satisfaction levels. Although their study centered on external outcomes, the present research pivots toward internal organizational dynamics, specifically investigating how customer focus as a TQM dimension affects employee behavior and performance within Chloride Exide.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed both descriptive and causal research designs to explore the relationship between Total Quality Management (TQM) and employee performance at Chloride Exide Kenya. The descriptive approach was used to gather data on employees' perceptions of TQM and to understand existing practices and outcomes, while the causal component aimed to examine potential cause-and-effect relationships. By using this dual approach, the study sought not only to describe current conditions but also to determine the impact of TQM initiatives on employee performance, thus providing a more holistic understanding of how quality management influences organizational outcomes.

B. Target Population

The target population for this study comprised the entire workforce of Chloride Exide Kenya, totalling approximately 300 employees across various departments. These included branch managers, senior supervisors, quality assurance officers, and sales and distribution staff. By involving employees at multiple organizational levels and functions, the study aimed to capture diverse perspectives on how TQM practices are implemented and perceived within the company. This inclusive sampling ensured that the findings would be representative of the organization's broader structure, providing a comprehensive view of the relationship between TQM practices and employee performance across the company. The study population is provided in TABLE I.

TABLE I: STUDY POPULATION

Target Population	Frequency	Percentage
Technicians	80	27%
Sales personnel	60	20%
Customer service department	70	23%
Business development personnel	40	13%
Administration	20	7%
Supply	30	10%
Total	300	100%

Source: (Researcher, 2025)

This study used stratified random sampling to ensure equal representation from all major departments at Chloride Exide Kenya. The population was divided into sub-groups, including technicians, sales, customer service, business development, administration, and supply. A total of 172 respondents were selected from the 300-employee population, using a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Proportional sampling was applied using the formula

$$nh = \left(\frac{Nh}{N}\right)n\tag{1}$$

where nh is the sample size for stratum h, Nh represent is the size of the population for stratum h, N represents the whole population size (300 in this case), and n represents the total sample size (172 in this case). The sampling fraction was calculated using $\frac{n}{N} = \frac{172}{300}$ and the results presented in TABLE II.

Target Population Strata Sample Strata Strata Percentage Frequency proportion 80 **Technicians** $(80 \div 300) \times 172$ 46 27% 60 (60÷300) x 172 34 19% Sales personnel 70 (70÷300) x 172 41 Customer service department 23% 22 40 (40÷300) x 172 13% Business development personnel Administration 20 (20÷300) x 172 12 8% Supply 30 $(30 \div 300) \times 172$ 17 10% Total 300 172 100%

TABLE II: STUDY SAMPLE

Source: (Researcher, 2025)

C. Data Collection Tools and Techniques

This study used structured questionnaires to collect quantitative data from respondents. The method was selected for its simplicity, cost-effectiveness, and ease of administration. Participants were asked to indicate whether specific TQM practices—such as customer focus, continuous improvement, employee development, and top management support—were implemented in their organization. A Likert scale measured the degree of agreement or disagreement with each item. This scale allowed for responses to be coded numerically, facilitating efficient data analysis using statistical software. The format encouraged participation due to its clarity and brevity, while also ensuring consistency and objectivity in the data collected.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

A. Questionnaire Return Rate

Out of 172 targeted participants across various departments, 168 responded to the survey, resulting in a 97.7% response rate, which is considered exceptionally high. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate exceeding 70% reflects strong engagement. This success is attributed to the research team's efficient planning, consistent follow-up, and adherence to data collection protocols. Additionally, the high level of participation indicates the respondents' genuine interest in the topic and their commitment to the study's objectives. The robust response rate enhanced the reliability and validity of the data collected, thereby strengthening the study's overall findings and conclusions.

B. Reliability Analysis

To assess the internal consistency of the research instrument, the study employed Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which ranges from 0 to 1. A higher value indicates stronger reliability. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.81, surpassing the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. This result demonstrates that the questionnaire used in the study possessed high internal reliability, indicating that the items were well-aligned and consistently measured the intended variables. The strong reliability score affirms the suitability of the instrument for capturing dependable and valid data for further statistical analysis.

C. Analysis of Employee Performance

Respondents evaluated their organization's performance based on product quality, efficiency, effectiveness, and customer satisfaction. Data was collected using a 5-point Likert scale, alongside general feedback on performance improvement. The responses provided insight into how employees perceive the organization's progress in key operational areas and its commitment to continuous improvement. When asked the "to what extent does employee performance of chloride Exide ltd improved?" the respondents survey is presented in TABLE III.

TABLE III: TO WHAT EXTENT DOES EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE OF CHLORIDE EXIDE LTD IMPROVED

Extent	Frequency	Percentage	
No extent	16	9.5	
Little Extent	17	10.1	
Moderate extent	33	19.6	
Great extent	34	20.2	
Very great extent	68	40.5	
Total	168	100	

Source: (Researcher, 2025)

As shown in TABLE III, 40.5% of respondents indicated that employee performance at Chloride Exide has improved to a great extent, while 20.2% rated it as having improved to a very great extent. Overall, 60.7% of participants affirmed a significant improvement in employee performance. These findings suggest that the majority perceive notable progress in employee contributions and output. Additionally, respondents assessed employee performance in terms of product quality, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Poor to 5 = Very Good). The summarized responses are presented in TABLE IV.

TABLE IV: EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT CHLORIDE EXIDE LTD

		Very poor	Poor	Neural	Good	Very good	M	SD
How do you rate the employee performance at Chloride Exide in terms of product quality?	Frequency %	17 9.9	34 19.8	16 9.3	54 31.4	47 27.3	3.48	1.353
How do you rate the employee performance at Chloride Exide in terms of efficiency?	Frequency %	34 19.8	16 9.3	32 18.6	23 13.4	63 36.6	3.39	1.551
How do you rate the employee performance at Chloride Exide in terms of effectiveness?	Frequency %	17 9.9	17 9.9	31 18	80 46.5	23 13.4	3.45	1.157
How do you rate the employee performance at Chloride Exide in terms of customer satisfaction?	Frequency %	17 9.9	17 9.9	0	47 27.3	87 50.6	4.01	1.358
Overall							3.583	1.355

Source: (Researcher, 2025)

Findings from TABLE IV indicate that employee performance at Chloride Exide Ltd is generally perceived as good, with varying scores across different dimensions. Product quality received a mean score of 3.48, while efficiency and effectiveness were both rated positively, with mean scores of 3.39 and 3.45, respectively. Although standard deviations exceeded 1.0, suggesting a range of views, more than half of respondents rated these areas as good or very good. Customer satisfaction received the highest ratings, with over 75% of respondents ranking it favorably and a mean of 4.0, reflecting the organization's alignment with Total Quality Management (TQM) principles that emphasize customer-centric strategies. The overall employee performance mean score was 3.58, which translates to a good rating. These results suggest that Chloride

Exide Ltd's emphasis on customer satisfaction, a core value in TQM, has positively influenced employee performance, reinforcing earlier research by Nguyen and Nagase (2019) on the cultural role of TQM in organizational success.

D. Customer Focus

Respondents assessed how customer focus influences employee performance at Chloride Exide using a 5-point Likert scale. Responses ranged from "no extent" to "very large extent." The results, summarized in TABLE V, reflect employee perceptions of how customer-centric initiatives impact their performance within the organization.

TABLE V: TO WHAT EXTENT DOES CUSTOMER FOCUS INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE OF CHLORIDE EXIDE LTD

Extent	Frequency	Percentage	
No extent	0	0	
Little Extent	15	8.93	
Moderate extent	34	20.24	
Great extent	35	20.83	
Very great extent	84	50	
Total	168	100	

Source: (Researcher, 2025)

Findings from TABLE V reveal that 50% of respondents believe customer focus has influenced employee performance at Chloride Exide to a very great extent, with an additional 20.83% indicating a great extent. Only 8.93% reported a small extent, and none indicated no influence. The standard deviation (SD = 1.025) reflects consistent responses across participants. The mean score confirms strong agreement that customer focus enhances employee performance. Table VI provides detailed insights into specific customer focus indicators assessed in the study.

TABLE VI: CUSTOMER FOCUS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN CHLORIDE EXIDE LTD.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neural	Agree	Strongly agree	M	SD
Customer driven standards influences employee performance in Chloride Exide	Frequency		17	32	35	84	4.11	1.044
	%		9.9	18.6	20.3	48.8		
Quality focus influences employee performance in Chloride Exide	Frequency	17	16	0	69	66	3.9	1.298
	%	9.9	9.3	0	40.1	38.4		
Supplier partnership influences employee performance in Chloride Exide	Frequency	0	17	16	49	86	4.21	0.986
	%	0	9.9	9.3	28.5	50		
Overall							4.07	1.109

Source: (Researcher, 2025)

TABLE VI reveals that the majority of respondents believe customer-driven standards, quality focus, and supplier partnerships positively impact employee performance at Chloride Exide Ltd. Specifically, 69.1% agreed that customer-driven standards influence performance, with a mean of 4.11 and SD of 1.044. For quality focus, 78.5% agreed, reflected by a mean of 3.9 and SD of 1.298. Supplier partnership received the strongest agreement, with 78.5% endorsing its influence and a mean of 4.21, the highest among the indicators. These results suggest that TQM practices that prioritize customer satisfaction and collaboration with suppliers contribute significantly to enhancing employee performance. The findings align with studies by Nguyen and Nagase [21] and Mohammed et al. [20], which emphasize the positive relationship between TQM practices and service quality. Chloride Exide's adoption of customer-oriented strategies and external partnerships demonstrates the organization's commitment to continuous improvement and performance enhancement through strategic quality management.

E. Summary of the Result

The study aimed to assess how customer focus influences employee performance at Chloride Exide Ltd. While descriptive data showed strong agreement among respondents reflected by a high mean score of 4.07—that customer focus positively affects performance, statistical analysis revealed a different outcome. Both correlation and regression results indicated a

negative, non-significant relationship between customer focus and employee performance. This suggests that, despite employee perceptions, customer focus may not directly impact internal performance metrics. These findings echo previous research by Nguyen and Nagase [21] and Mohammed et al. [20], who linked customer focus with enhanced customer satisfaction and service quality rather than direct employee outcomes. Therefore, customer-focused practices might contribute more strongly to external service delivery than to internal employee performance, possibly through indirect channels. The results highlight the need for further research into intervening variables, such as job satisfaction or training, that may bridge customer focus and performance improvements within organizations implementing TQM.

V. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the influence of customer focus, a key principle of TQM on employee performance at Chloride Exide Ltd in Kenya. The findings revealed that while respondents perceived customer-focused practices as significantly enhancing employee performance, particularly in areas such as product quality, efficiency, and customer satisfaction, the statistical analysis presented a contrasting perspective. Correlation and regression analyses both indicated a negative but statistically insignificant relationship between customer focus and employee performance. This suggests that although customer focus is recognized as a valuable organizational strategy, its direct effect on employee performance may be minimal or mediated by other factors.

The research offers several advantages. It contributes to the growing body of knowledge on TQM implementation in developing economies, particularly in the context of employee performance. It also provides managers with insight into how customer-centric strategies are perceived internally, helping them make more informed decisions about organizational improvement initiatives. Additionally, the study introduces practical implications for future quality management systems by highlighting the possible disconnect between perception and measurable performance outcomes.

However, the research has some limitations. It focused exclusively on the customer focus component of TQM, without a comprehensive assessment of other critical dimensions such as leadership, continuous improvement, or employee involvement. Moreover, the study was cross-sectional in nature, capturing responses at a single point in time and limiting the ability to track performance changes over a longer period.

In reviewing the main sections of this research, the study employed a descriptive and causal research design, targeting a population of 300 employees across multiple departments. Using stratified random sampling, data was collected from 172 respondents through structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS. The descriptive findings showed that employees believe customer focus positively influences their performance. However, the inferential statistics revealed that this belief does not translate into a statistically significant relationship.

Despite this, the research has practical value. Organizations can use the findings to reassess the direct impact of customer focus on employee outcomes and consider integrating other performance-enhancing factors such as training, motivation, and supportive leadership. The study also encourages future research to explore these mediating variables, which may bridge the gap between TQM practices and internal performance indicators. Ultimately, while customer focus remains a cornerstone of TQM, its influence on employee performance may be more nuanced and context-dependent than previously assumed.

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