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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of employee organizational identification on employee performance in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya. Recent surveys done in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya have shown presence of employee divided loyalty challenges and sabotage that were likely to impact on employee performance. A cross sectional descriptive survey was used to analyze this relationship. A sample of 332 respondents was picked through simple random sampling method from the population on an equitable distribution ratio from 10 organizations in the industry. Data was collected by use of structured questionnaires that were measured on 5 point Likert scale format. Analysis of data was done by SPSS. Descriptive and inferential results were presented in tables and figures. The findings of the study indicated that employee organizational identification significantly influenced employee performance. The study recommended that organizations in the motor vehicle industry should review their policies and practices to include factors that enhance employee loyalty, value similarity and belongingness that the objective of this study have identified, thereby improving employee performance. The limitations of this study were occasioned by use of single variable, adoption of cross sectional survey method for a behavioral study and studying a segment of an industry that has many horizontal players. Future studies should address these limitations by analyzing additional variables that would cover the gaps, considering a longitudinal research design to explain consistency in behavior and expanding the context of the study to cover the entire industry.

Key words: *Employee Organizational Identification, Employee Performance*

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1.1 Background of the study

Survey report by Beck and Harter (2015) on employee engagement in the American listed companies showed that engagement among USA workers was low at 30 percent. This meant that about 70 percent of employees do not seem to be loyal to their organizations. This gap is so huge and worth analyzing. Beck and Harter's (2015) report is in line with the general rising concerns about the level of employee identification in organizations that impacts employee performance. Employee engagement is a manifestation of positive organizational identification. Different reasons have been alluded to by previous researchers on why employees disidentify with their organizations, but one common reason relates to an employee's feeling of belongingness to the organization.

Beck and Harters findings aroused the researcher's interest to empirically test further the proposition that employee organizational identification (EOI) influences employee performance. Surveys in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya revealed that the sector was today faced with employee identification challenges exhibited through various employees' abnormal behaviours such as absenteeism, conflict of interest, sabotage, theft, divided loyalty and so on that impact both employee and organizational performance (African Development Bank, 2017). Concerns about employee performance in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya have been raised in the recent past that links low employee identification with inadequate training (Draft National Automotive Policy, 2019). Though on the job training has been up scaled in most organizations, employee performance has not improved much. Training has been found to foster loyalty which is a dimension of EOI. Survey by CFAO (2019) in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya on employee workplace ownership revealed that 70 percent of employees in the industry did not perceive workplace ownership. Literature shows that workplace ownership is an aspect of organizational belongingness, and organizational belongingness is a measure of EOI (Tajfel *et al.*, 1979). The CFAO survey findings were similar to Gallup's survey findings in 2015 reported by Beck and Harter. Observations of employee behaviours in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya revealed that majority of the staff engage in make shift garages otherwise called "Jua Kali garages" besides their normal employment. This revelation is of grave concern because it depicts a sign of divided loyalty in the form of conflict of interest that can affect employee performance.

This study draws from social identity theory (SIT) which is one of the important behavioural theories that postulates why some employees in the organization engage in cooperative behaviours that benefit the organization, while others don't (Ashforth, 2008). Past studies have shown that SIT has been positively linked with EOI (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The most important aspect of SIT is that it fosters employee loyalty and engagement through feeling of belongingness to an organization. The theory postulates that employees' who strongly identify with their organizations perform well. This was supported by Ziapour and Jaffery (2014) who opined that positively identified employees remain loyal, have love for organizations and perform well.

Employee Organizational Identification

Behavioural scholars have expressed EOI as an employee's perception of the company and the degree to which employees feel that they share similar values with their organization (Loi, 2014). Study by Terzioglu (2016) on factors affecting performance among other variables showed that

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EOI was an attitude that can induce employee perceptions of the organization leading to either an employee becoming loyal or develop a negative attitude toward the organization and that dichotomy impacts employee performance. Studies have predicted that positively identified employees' exhibits positive behaviours (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Employees tend to identify with broad sets of qualitative entities in the organization, such as organizational leaders, symbols, products, quality, organizational knowledge and so on. Such entities need to be enhanced for EOI to be strong. When employees positively perceive one or all of these entities then organizational identification develops leading to better employee outcomes. Literature shows that strong EOI drives job fulfillment, good feelings about the organization and the desire to stay (Khoshlahn, 2016), in addition to defending their organizations against any negative criticism at all cost (Terzioglu, 2016).

Employee Performance

Employee performance has been construed as the capability of an employee in achieving the set work objectives (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Grant, 2010). Literature has shown that the assessment of employee performance focuses on evaluating contextual and task accomplishment (Yaghoubi, 2013). Performance evaluation exercise, measures level of task achievement thus quality, quantity, skills and behaviours required for effective task performance and contextual performance entails effective feedback on communication, commitment, team playership and so on within a specified period of time. Researches on work performance have shown that employee performance is a product of skills, physical behaviours and perceptions of the work environment. The strength or weakness of this mixture determine levels of individual performance (Armstrong, 2007).

Motor Vehicle Industry in Kenya

This study was undertaken in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya. The industry comprises companies that deal in the sale and distribution of new cars, used cars, car assembly and car spares parts (KMI, 2020). The scope of this study was limited to the segment that deals in the sale of new cars alone. The new car dealers are few in number but have a high market concentration ratio, each one specializing in particular type of vehicle(s) brands. The companies mainly retail and distribute a range(s) of specific vehicle brands and offer after sales service for the sold brands (KMI, 2020). The new car companies include Toyota (East Africa), Cooper Motor Corporation, Isuzu Kenya, Simba Colt (now Simba Corporation), D.T. Dobie, Nissan Kenya Limited, RMA, Urysia, Kenya Grange and Inchape (K) ltd (KMI,2020).

Report by Higgins (2018) showed that the motor vehicle industry was experiencing a challenging employee behavior, where employees sabotage their employers/organizations thereby compromising their loyalty and ability to perform effectively. Gichuke (2013) opined that sabotage in the Kenyan situation was conflict of interest for staff who own jua kali garages that are not registered by Kenya motor vehicle repairers association (KEMRA). Survey by CFAO (2019) on employee workplace ownership (termed in the mood) showed that 70 percent of employees in affiliate companies lacked workplace ownership. This was likely to affect employee performance in the industry. Workplace ownership is associated with employee belongingness which is a measure of EOI. EOI has been shown to have very positive influence on most organizational outcomes. According to Knippenberg (2000), it is the duty of organizations to induce employee loyalty and commitment that leads to high employee performance and managers should develop strategies that draw employees' positive perceptions that enhance workplace ownership. Literature

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has shown that strong EOI has a positive relationship with employee performance (Ziapour et al., 2014). The behavior of divided loyalty is a problem that the researcher found necessary to study and the motor vehicle industry is the suitable context to undertake research involving the influence of EOI on employee performance.

Research Problem

Scholars have shown that there is a relationship between EOI and employee performance (Yaghoubi *et al.*, 2013; Cheney, 2016; Meyer *et al.*, 2010). However the wide variations in the findings calls for more attention and further research to establish the extent to which EOI influences employee performance. Social identity theory postulates that employee performance is a consequence of employee perceptions of the organization (Terzioglu & Uslu, 2016). Employee perceptions define how an employee relates with their organization and the extent of that relationship determines the level of EOI (Yaghoubi *et al.*, 2013). Studies have shown that strong EOI positively influences employee performance (Yucel, 2012). Though there is an increase in studies involving EOI and employee outcomes, the variations are not yet convincing. Hence it was still important for this study to test the influence of EOI on employee performance to enable sufficient generalization of the impact of that relationship.

Surveys in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya have shown presence of employee divided loyalty challenges that are likely to impact on employee performance. Globally, divided loyalty behaviour has recently been noted at Tesla Company where an employee engaged in behaviours bordering sabotage (Higgins, 2018). Survey by CFAO (2019), on employee satisfaction and workplace ownership also showed divided loyalty among employees. The findings of the CFAO survey showed that majority of employees' interviewed did not perceive workplace ownership. This behaviour depicted low EOI which can negatively impact employee performance (Chiney, 2016). It can be argued that low employee workplace ownership (belongingness) causes low employee performance. While this is likely, it has not been tested empirically in this industry. This study hence aims to establish if EOI influences employee performance in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya. The display of divided loyalty among employees in the industry makes the sector ideal for this study.

Empirical studies are increasingly trying to establish the relationship between EOI and employee performance. A study by Tuna et al. (2018) on organizational identification and employee performance among other variables, showed a moderate relationship between organizational identification and employee performance. Study by Lam *et al.* (2011) on organizational identification and team performance in the automotive dealership in China found that there was no direct linkage between EOI and team performance. However the study revealed that team belongingness was necessary in achieving performance. Another study by Omari (2012) on cognitive factors among other variables in the Kenyan public corporations found that psychological wellbeing of employees influenced employee outcomes. Psychological wellbeing is embedded in EOI and triggers liking for an organization.

Previous studies done in the motor vehicle industry in Kenyan have basically focused on firm performance, organizational commitment and strategic positioning. None, based on the researcher's knowledge has been done on the relationship between EOI and employee performance. Majority of the studies involving EOI and individual Performance have been done a lot more in the western context. This study attempts to explore the relationship between EOI and

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employee performance in the Kenyan context. The methodological gap established from literature is that majority of the studies analyzed teams as a unit of analysis, however data collection from teams has a risk of intra and inter group dynamics. This study addressed this gap by collecting data from individual employees as a unit of measurement. Based on empirical, contextual and methodological gaps this study attempts to address the assumption of the study by asking the question: does EOI influence employee performance in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya?

Research Objective

The objective of this study was to establish the influence employee organizational identification on employee performance in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya.

2.1 Literature Review

This study was anchored on social identification theory (SIT). SIT was advanced by Tajfel and Turner in 1970's, and supposes that individuals assume universal tendency to maintain a positive identification through three key components namely loyalty, similarity and belongingness. The theory postulates that positive organizational perception lead to strong identification and vice versa making it a key theory that effectively predicts outcomes of the relationship between employees and their organizations. Literature has shown that SIT has been important in explaining why employees would either identify or disidentify with their organizations with the various resulting outcomes (Tajfel *et al.*, 1979; Ashforth, 2008). Ashforth (2008) opined that EOI fosters employee loyalty, similarity of values and the feeling of belongingness to a group. Similarly, Tajfel *et al.* (1979) explained that employees' feeling of belongingness is determined by their degree of identification with the positive aspects of the firm.

It is important to mention that SIT assumes that employees tend to identify with certain aspects of the organization that they perceive are similar to their values. Positive perceptions lead to strong EOI and vice versa (Tajfel *et al.*, 1979; Ashforth, 2008). SIT was advanced by Tajfel and Turner in 1970's, and supposes that employees as social units, assume universal tendency to maintain a positive organizational identification through three key components: loyalty, similarity and belongingness. Ashforth (2008) opined that EOI fosters employee loyalty, similarity of values and the feeling of belongingness to the organization. Similarly Tajfel *et al.* (1979) explained that employees' feeling of belongingness is determined by their degree of identification with the positive aspects of the firm.

Scholars are in agreement that SIT opens up ground for debate regarding the structure of social identities, the motivations behind identification and how identification influence individual and group outcomes (Abraham & Gilat, 2007). SIT is projected to describe three mental processes that people go through when they join a group namely; social categorization, social identification and social comparisons (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Of the three mental processes, it is social identification that describes the process of identifying as a group member and the process of beginning to behave the way members of the group behaves. It has been shown that strong social identification can lead to people showing important prosocial behaviour towards an organization (Tak, *et al.*, 2004). That is the debate this study projects to contribute to by analyzing if the theory supports the influence of EOI on employee performance.

Though SIT has positive postulations on employee identification, the theory has been criticized as a model that offers psychological foundations for employee discrimination, prejudice, and inter-

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group conflicts through social categorization (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). The weakness of this theory is that, it is difficult to express the extent to which identification impacts employee performance, for example, it is naturally recognized that employees would temporarily respond to favorable economic gains such as a pay rise, with high levels of work performance even if identification was not strong and positive (Riketta, 2005). This limits the predictive value of the theory. This study addressed the weakness by analyzing the extent to which EOI would influence employee performance. Despite the criticism, SIT remains a suitable theory for this study as it emphasizes the importance of EOI in influencing employee performance

Employee Organizational Identification and Employee Performance

Previous studies have supported that there is a relationship between EOI and employee performance, for example study by Mauno (2014) on EOI, occupational wellbeing and labour output found positive relationship between EOI and labour output; Studies by Ziapour et al. (2014) on identification and labour productivity revealed that employees who identify with their organizations become loyal, share similar values and make every effort to remain in the organization and perform better. Another study by Garud (2001) on organizational identification and organizational performance established that employees who identified positively with their organizations develop high affective commitment that impact positive employee performance; A similar study by Lee (2007) on organizational identification and employee attitude to work, posited that workers who identify with their Firms showed more favorable attitude towards work than those who disidentify.

Another study by Cheney (2016) on organizational identification and employee engagement found a significant relationship between organizational identification and employee engagement. Cheney’s study further revealed that positively identified employees are good at making decisions, are committed and interact well with colleagues. However the variations in the findings of the previous studies makes it important to further test the relationship between EOI and employee performance in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya to provide more understanding on EOI - employee relationship. The hypothetical relationship between EOI and employee performance is shown as conceptual model in Fig 1.

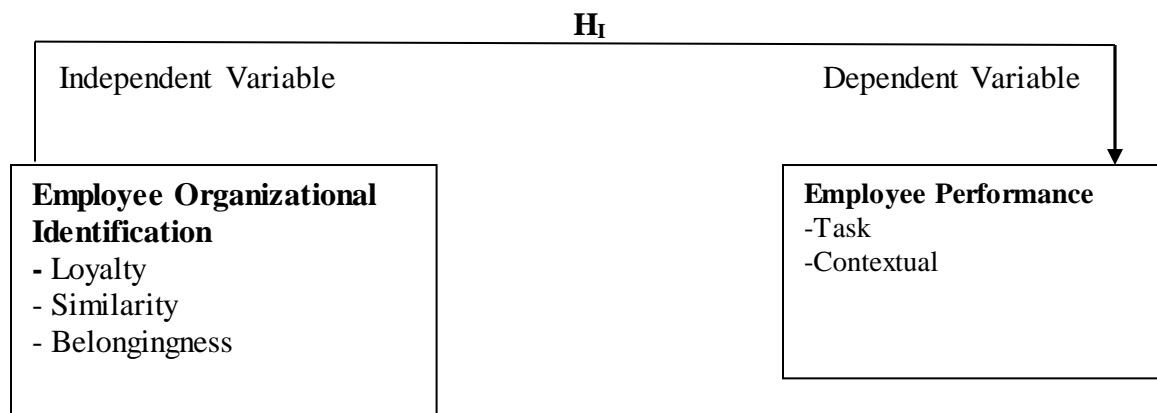


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Source: Researcher (2022)

Null Hypotheses

Ho. Employee organizational identification does not influence employee performance.

3.1 Research Methodology

This research adopted positivist paradigm since it met the four key requirements of positivist studies according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), analysis of concepts, problem statement, literature review, and data analysis. In positivism, developing knowledge requires operationalization of concepts, formulation of hypothesis, and data collection through questionnaires that are quantitatively analyzed for the generalization of findings, and this study met those criteria.

The study used descriptive cross sectional survey design because it describes and gives justification of the phenomenon as it happens at that point in time. The descriptive design has been found suitable for establishing relationships among variables (Weinreich, 2009). Cross sectional surveys require data collection from the population through questionnaires. The study analyzed employee performance hence the unit of analysis was the employee from whom data was collected.

The study population was 2425 employees in the new motor vehicle dealership in Kenya at the time. The population comprised all the permanent employees in the different strata ranging from, senior managers, mid-level managers and junior supervisors to shop floor employees. The study sample was 332 respondents who were randomly chosen. Primary data was collected from the respondents through structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed from the literature and the statements varied in strength of occurrence in a five (5) likert scale format alternating from 5 (Very large extent); 4 (Large extent); 3 (Moderate extent); 2 (Small extent) and 1 (Very small extent). The questionnaire was structured into six (6) parts. Respondents were expected to show the degree of their acceptance of the statements.

The descriptive statistics examined the distributive features of the respondents in terms of frequencies, measures of distribution and deviations. Linear regression was used to test the relationship between EOI and employee performance. The study used SPSS version 22 to analyze data.

4.1 Data Analysis and Findings

The study used Cronbach's alpha method to test for reliability. Cronbach alpha uses the rule of thumb of the value 0.70, and any value above 0.70 to 1 is considered to be higher reliability (Creswell, 2013). This study's alpha value was 0.928, and compared to the rule of the thumb it was found to be higher and closer to 1, meaning there was high reliability in internal consistency. Table 1 shows the reliability results of Cronbach's alpha test.

Table 1: Measures for Reliability Test

Variable	Items	Cronbach Alpha	Comments
EOI	9	0.928	Reliable
Employee Performance	6	0.758	Reliable

Source: Data analysis (2022)

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Table 1 shows that EOI scale had the highest score of internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.928 and employee performance scored 0.758. All the scales indicated high scores above the rule of the thumb hence; internal consistency of the instruments for collection of data was confirmed

A pilot analysis was carried out to ensure that the instruments were effectively and significantly drafted to collect the relevant information that can address the objective of the study. The questionnaires were pilot tested on twenty four (24) employees from three major companies who were selected at random to determine content and face validity of the data collection instrument and adjustments were made accordingly before the final data collection was rolled out. Factor analysis was used to test for validity. The validity scores are shown in Table 2

Table 2: Factor Analysis (KMO and Bartlett's Test)

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.838
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	10903.439
	df	820
	Sig.	0.000

Source: Data analysis (2022)

Table 2 shows that appropriateness of factor analysis was supported by Bartlett’s test of sphericity which indicates the strength of relationship among variables. The findings showed that the results were significant (X^2 test = 10903.439). The KMO measure of sampling adequacy yielded a value of 0.838, indicating that the sample size was large enough to assess the factor structure. The high score was close to 1.0 indicating that the statements for analysis were useful and relevant.

Normality Test

The study also tested for normality using Kolmogorov Smirnov testing method. Table 3 shows Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used since the population was more than 2,000 (Razali et al., 2011).

Table 3: Test of Normality Scores

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
EOI	.267	275	.000
Employee performance	.312	275	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 3 shows that the Kolmogorov Smirnov results were EOI scored 0.267 and employee performance scored 0.312. The degrees of freedom for each variable is equal to the number of data points which is 275. The p-value for each variable is significant at $p < .05$. This implies that there was evidence for normal distribution.

Test of Hypothesis

Ho₁: Employee organizational identification does not Influence Employee Performance

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The first objective of the study was to establish if EOI influence employee performance. This was done by testing a corresponding null hypothesis that EOI does not influence employee performance. Linear regression was used to test the hypothesis. The regression model was specified as follows; $EP = \beta_0 + \beta_1EOI + \varepsilon$. The outcomes of the test for hypothesis one is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression Output for the Influence of EOI on Employee Performance

Model Summary						
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.587a	.344	.321	.70744		
ANOVAa						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	7.354	1	7.354	14.693	.001b
	Residual	14.013	278	.500		
	Total	21.367	279			
Coefficients						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	2.776	.451		6.150	.000
	EOI	.425	.111	.587	3.833	.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), EOI
 b. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Source: Data Analysis (2022)

Results in Table 4 show a strong positive influence of EOI on employee performance. The correlation coefficient (R) score was 0.587 and coefficient determination (R²) was 0.344 at P value < 0.05. This suggested that about 34 percent of the changes in employee performance was caused by EOI. The remaining 66 percent was caused by other factors that were not included in this study. From Table 4, F ratio is 14.963 which is significant (P < 0.05). The significant F-ratio indicates goodness of fit of the regression model. This therefore means that the regression model used for the test of hypothesis one was appropriate. Based on these results the null hypothesis that EOI does not influence employee performance is rejected.

Table 4 further shows the beta coefficient for EOI ($\beta = 0.425$, $P < 0.05$), which is significant. This outcome implies that 0.425 of change in employee performance is explained by a unit change in EOI, hence the derived regression equation is presented as; Employee performance = 2.776 + 0.425EOI + 0.111 ε . Where EOI = Employee organizational identification and ε = Error term. The

derived regression model confirms further that hypothesis one, which stated that EOI does not influence employee performance, was rejected.

The significant results of the linear regression test of the influence of EOI on employee performance compares well with earlier findings by Miao (2019) who studied the role of organizational identification on job performance among other variables and found that organizational identification influenced job performance. These results were significant and positive. The findings further compared well with study by Santas et al., (2016) on the effect of identification, loneliness at work and employees 'performance in Turkish healthcare institution and found that identification significantly influence employee performance. This finding compares with findings of the study by Ashforth and Corley (2008) who studied the impact of identification in organizations. They found that organizational identification roots an employee in the organization thereby making one to develop a great desire to remain in the organization. The desire to stay is associated with belongingness which is a dimension of EOI, and belongingness has been shown to have important effects that includes enhanced affection for the organization that in turn leads to high productivity. However, the findings are in contrast with study by Tuna et al. (2018) on the effects of organizational identification and cynicism on employee performance among nurses, who found a negative organizational identification - employee performance relationship when cynicism was introduced in the regression model. The current study findings have contributed to the progression of the argument that EOI influences employee performance.

5.1 Conclusion of the study

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of EOI on employee performance. A corresponding null hypothesis stated that EOI does not influence employee performance was tested. Test results showed that EOI significantly and positively influenced employee performance. Test outcomes gave sufficient evidence that the null hypothesis that EOI does not influence employee performance was rejected, and alternative hypothesis that EOI influences employee performance accepted.

The regression value (R) of 0.587, indicated that the strength of EOI - employee performance relationship was significant. While the significant coefficient of determination (R^2) indicated that about 34 percentage change in employee performance was attributed to EOI. The F-value was significant and implied that the model had a goodness of fit for the study. The significant results implied that the objective of the study was positively determined that EOI influences employee performance. The results also meant that null hypothesis that stated that EOI does not influence employee performance was rejected and alternative hypothesis (H_a) that EOI influence employee performance supported. This finding supported social identification theory postulation that employees who strongly identify with their organizations are likely to be loyal and willing to effectively support organizational objectives which include better performance.

6.1 Recommendation

The study found that 34 percent of changes in employee performance were attributed to EOI. This was significant but moderate influence. The study therefore recommended that a similar study be done to establish the 66 percent gap for better understanding of the influence of EOI on employee performance. In addition, a longitudinal study would also be important to enable a generalized understanding of the influence of EOI on employee performance as observed for a long period of

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time to establish consistency of behaviour. The study further recommends that managers in the motor vehicle industry in Kenya to enhance policies and practices that trigger EOI for employee performance to improve.

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