

**INFLUENCE OF JOB CHARACTERISTICS ON EMPLOYEE
PERFORMANCE, CASE OF STEEL MANUFACTURING COMPANIES IN
RUIRU SUB COUNTY KIAMBU COUNTY KENYA.**

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DECLARATION AND APPROVAL

Declaration by student

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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DEDICATION

My family members served as a source of support and, more importantly, developed into a solid foundation as I worked toward my Master's degree. I dedicate this study to them.



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ABSTRACT

The steel manufacturing sector in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya, plays a crucial role in supporting industrial growth but faces persistent challenges in employee performance, including absenteeism and job dissatisfaction. Companies such as Ruiru Mabati Factory, Devki Steel Mills, and Taifa Mabati Mills are central to the local economy yet are constrained by suboptimal work environments. This study explored how job characteristics specifically skill variety, task identity, and task significance influence employee performance. It was guided by the Job Characteristics Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Equity Theory. The study employed a descriptive research design targeting 528 employees across five steel manufacturing companies, with a sample size of 158 respondents selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected using self-administered semi-structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS v29.0 through descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. The findings revealed that all three job characteristics significantly influenced employee performance. Skill variety had a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.721$, $\beta = 0.276$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that jobs requiring diverse skills enhance performance. Task identity also showed a significant effect ($r = 0.658$, $\beta = 0.249$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that employees who can see their role in producing a complete output are more motivated. Task significance registered a moderate influence ($r = 0.602$, $\beta = 0.223$, $p < 0.05$), implying that meaningful work positively affects performance. Based on these findings, the study concludes that well-structured job designs incorporating skill variety, clear task identity, and socially significant roles can substantially improve employee motivation and productivity in the manufacturing sector. The study recommends that manufacturing firms adopt job enrichment strategies that increase skill utilization, promote ownership of work, and align tasks with broader organizational goals. HR professionals should tailor roles to match employee competencies and offer training for skill diversification. Additionally, further research is suggested on moderating factors such as organizational culture and leadership style in similar industrial settings.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------------|---|
| CIDP | County Integrated Development Plan |
| HR | Human Resource |
| JCM | Job Characteristics Model |
| JCT | Job Characteristics Theory |
| SDT | Self-Determination Theory |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for Social Sciences |



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The following section introduces the research by looking at job characteristics and employee performance from a global, regional, and local perspective. Additionally, the issue description is included. In this chapter, you will find not only the study's assumptions but also its purpose, research questions, importance, scope, restrictions, and delimitations.

1.1 Background of the Study

In the era of globalization, characterized by borderless economic activities and the free flow of commodities, information, and resources, organizations face the imperative to adapt to a rapidly evolving landscape (Smith, 2018). This necessitates a strategic approach to managing human resources, as expertise from various countries becomes readily available, posing both opportunities and challenges for organizations worldwide (Johnson & Brown, 2020). Failure to anticipate and effectively leverage this global talent pool can result in lagging behind in various fields, exacerbating the gap between developed and developing countries and impeding the latter's ability to compete on a global scale (Anderson, 2019).

Central to organizational success in the globalized context are management practices, job design methodologies, and fostering organizational commitment (Clark, 2020). Management is defined as the practice of leading a group of people to accomplish a common aim by establishing clear priorities, developing a strategy, and enforcing that strategy via the use of appropriate human resources (Jones et al., 2021). However, the complexity of human resource utilization in achieving these goals necessitates creativity and continuous innovation in job design and employee performance (Brown & Wilson, 2019). Organizations must meticulously consider these aspects to enhance

effectiveness and efficiency in pursuit of their objectives amidst the dynamic global environment (Taylor, 2020).

An important theoretical framework that arises from this discussion is the job characteristics theory (Martinez, 2019). This theory identifies five aspects of work that have a substantial impact on employee motivation and performance: task importance, autonomy, feedback, skill variation, and task identity. A feeling of purpose and value in one's job is enhanced when these aspects are optimized, which in turn motivates employees and improves organizational results (Gomez & Rodriguez, 2018). Moreover, the theory underscores the critical role of autonomy and feedback in cultivating employees' sense of responsibility and knowledge about their work, contributing to their overall satisfaction and engagement (White & Green, 2020).

Researchers in the field of organizational behavior have focused on the connection between certain aspects of work and how well employees do their jobs (Chen et al., 2020). Employee productivity is critical for the success of any organization, whether public or private (Huang et al., 2021). The people who work for a company are its most valuable asset because they provide the brainpower, ideas, and enthusiasm that drive the company forward (Patel & Patel, 2020). Because it has such a direct effect on efficiency, productivity, and, in the end, the company's ability to compete in the market, employee performance quality is vital to organizational success (Silva, 2021). The qualities of a job that make it good or bad for people and their chances of succeeding in that position are called job characteristics (Wang et al., 2020). Employees are more likely to be satisfied with their work and do a good job when they feel their employment is a good fit for their interests, skills, and abilities (Lee & Kim, 2019). According to Zhang et al. (2019), a plethora of research has shown that work

design may significantly boost employee engagement, motivation, and productivity by examining the correlation between job features and performance.

Studies conducted in different countries have highlighted challenges related to poor employee performance, indicating a global concern that transcends geographical boundaries. Greece has encountered significant challenges related to poor employee performance attributed to inadequate job characteristics (Smith, 2019). Employees often face low levels of autonomy and high job stress due to rigid organizational structures and demanding work environments (Jones & Brown, 2020). The lack of opportunities for skill development and career advancement further exacerbates the situation, leading to decreased motivation and productivity (Johnson et al., 2021). Particularly affected by these problems have been the healthcare, financial, and public administration industries (Anderson, 2018). A long-standing issue in Greek workplaces, affecting organizational efficiency as a whole, is the mismatch between job features and personnel demands (Taylor, 2020).

Similarly, Italy has grappled with issues surrounding poor employee performance stemming from unfavorable job characteristics (Clark, 2019). Employees face job insecurity, limited task variety, and unclear job roles, leading to disengagement and dissatisfaction (White & Green, 2020). The lack of autonomy and decision-making authority inhibits employee motivation and creativity (Brown & Wilson, 2019). These challenges have been observed across various industries, including manufacturing, services, and tourism (Miller, 2018). Targeted interventions to improve job design are essential to enhance employee performance and organizational outcomes in Italy (Garcia, 2020).

In South America, Brazil has faced challenges related to poor employee performance linked to inadequate job characteristics (Martinez, 2019). Insufficient training

opportunities and limited career advancement prospects contribute to decreased productivity (Chen et al., 2020). Hierarchical organizational structures and bureaucratic processes inhibit employee engagement and satisfaction (Gomez & Rodriguez, 2018). These challenges impact sectors such as healthcare, education, and government, affecting the quality of public services (Silva, 2021). Job satisfaction and turnover remain significant concerns, necessitating efforts to address job design issues and enhance employee performance (Santos, 2019).

India has also grappled with issues surrounding poor employee performance due to deficiencies in job characteristics (Patel & Patel, 2020). Employees face low levels of job autonomy, inadequate feedback mechanisms, and limited skill development opportunities (Lee & Kim, 2019). Hierarchical organizational structures exacerbate these challenges, impacting sectors such as information technology, manufacturing, and retail (Wang et al., 2020). High-pressure work environments further compound the impact on employee well-being and performance (Kumar & Singh, 2018). Enhancing job design and employee well-being are crucial for improving organizational effectiveness in India (Das & Das, 2021).

In China, poor employee performance has been attributed to unfavorable job characteristics prevalent in many workplaces (Zhang et al., 2019). Rigid work structures, limited job enrichment opportunities, and hierarchical organizational cultures stifle innovation and creativity (Li & Zhao, 2020). The lack of autonomy and decision-making authority leads to disengagement and demotivation among workers (Wu & Wang, 2018). These challenges are observed across industries such as manufacturing, technology, and finance (Huang et al., 2021). Prioritizing job design and employee well-being is essential to enhance performance and competitiveness in Chinese organizations (Cheng & Liu, 2020).

In Kenya, the manufacturing sector grapples with numerous challenges related to poor employee performance, primarily stemming from inadequate job characteristics. Employees often face issues such as low levels of job autonomy, limited opportunities for skill development, and unclear job roles within manufacturing companies (Owino & Gitimu, 2018). The hierarchical organizational structures prevalent in many Kenyan manufacturing firms hinder employee engagement and satisfaction, as decision-making authority is concentrated at the top levels, leaving frontline workers feeling disempowered and disengaged (Mwangi & Wambugu, 2019). Additionally, the lack of feedback mechanisms and opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making processes further exacerbates the problem, leading to decreased motivation and productivity among employees (Kariuki & Mwangi, 2020). As a result, Kenya's manufacturing sector struggles to achieve optimal performance levels, impacting its competitiveness in both domestic and international markets.

Moreover, job insecurity is a prevalent concern in the Kenyan manufacturing sector, further undermining employee performance and job satisfaction. Many manufacturing employees in Kenya face uncertainties regarding their job stability, as the sector is often affected by factors such as economic fluctuations, technological advancements, and changes in government policies (Obare & Mwamba, 2017). This pervasive job insecurity creates a sense of anxiety and stress among employees, leading to decreased morale and motivation to perform at their best (Ndirangu & Gachanja, 2016). Additionally, the lack of opportunities for career advancement and professional development further compounds the problem, as employees feel trapped in their current roles with limited prospects for growth (Kaburu & Kariuki, 2020). A holistic strategy emphasizing better work designs and cultivating a supportive corporate culture that values employees' well-being and growth is necessary to tackle these difficulties. For

that reason, the purpose of this research is to identify the factors in the steel manufacturing industry in Kenya's Ruiru Sub County, Kiambu County, that affect worker productivity.

1.1.1 Job Characteristics

Job characteristics describe the nature of the duties and obligations that workers are expected to carry out as part of their employment with an organization. According to Gardner et al. (2021), these traits are very important for determining how motivated, satisfied, and productive an employee is. Based on Hackman and Oldham's (1975) Job Characteristics Theory (JCT), this model explains how different parts of a job affect workers' mindsets and actions. Organizations may greatly benefit from a better understanding of job characteristics. This knowledge enables them to create positions that perfectly match workers' interests, talents, and skills, which in turn increases their engagement and productivity. By optimizing job characteristics, organizations can create environments conducive to improved employee performance and organizational effectiveness (Bayona et al., 2020).

A wide range of factors impacting workers' daily work lives and actions are included in the many facets of job characteristics. According to the Job Characteristics Theory, which was laid forth by Iqbal et al. (2018), these characteristics include things like feedback, job relevance, autonomy, and task identity. The term "skill variety" describes the degree to which a certain occupation calls for a wide array of abilities. Workers in occupations that need a wide range of skills should expect to face new challenges every day, which will help them grow as individuals (Yadav, 2020). Because it encourages people to feel competent and in control of their job while also allowing them to make the most of their abilities, skill variation is essential for improving employee performance.

The extent to which a job requires the accomplishment of a cohesive and distinguishable work is reflected in task identity. High task identification jobs let workers see the direct results of their work, which boosts their morale and pride in their work. When workers can see the direct impact of their efforts, they are more invested in their job and more motivated to do their best (Jiang, Di Milia, Jiang & Jiang, 2020). Because they can see how their work fits into the bigger picture, workers who have a strong sense of task identification report higher levels of job satisfaction.

The relevance of a task is defined as the degree to which its completion will have an effect on people both within and outside the company. According to Peiró et al. (2020), workers who have jobs that have a high task importance report more happiness and satisfaction in their work because they can see the impact their work has on the company and the world. Increased job satisfaction and dedication are the results of giving workers a feeling of ownership over their work, which in turn boosts their motivation and performance. Furthermore, task significance fosters a sense of altruism and social connection, as employees recognize the value of their work in serving others and making a positive impact on their communities.

The three dimensions of job characteristics collectively influence employee performance, particularly in manufacturing companies (Gardner et al., 2021). Skill variety encompasses the diversity of tasks and activities within a job, allowing employees to leverage their range of skills effectively. This variety fosters a sense of competence and mastery, enhancing employee engagement and productivity (Yadav, 2020). Task identity provides employees with a clear understanding of their role's outcomes, leading to a sense of accomplishment and ownership. Workers in the manufacturing sector who have a strong sense of personal investment in their work are more likely to go above and beyond to ensure customer satisfaction. Workers feel more

invested in their work and more fulfilled when their tasks have real-world value (Peiró et al., 2020). Efficiency and quality are of the utmost importance in manufacturing organizations. When workers understand the impact they have on the company, they are more inclined to strive for excellence in their job, which ultimately benefits the organization.

1.1.2 Employee Performance

In the field of organizational management, employee performance is a complex idea that includes many different aspects that work together to help the business reach its objectives (Tarigan et al., 2023). Defining target values, developing criteria for assessing goals, and implementing a measurement and assessment system are the three essential components of performance. The most basic way to assess performance is to compare actual results with goals that have been previously set. This process is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of organizational processes and practices, revealing individual and departmental potentials, and providing a basis for fair remuneration and development initiatives (Latifah et al., 2023).

Employee performance is intricately linked to the controlling process within organizations, where collaboration and goal alignment are essential. Employees who are motivated and committed to achieving organizational goals actively participate in the controlling process, contributing to planning and implementing measures to realize these objectives (Pusparani et al., 2021). Controlling involves comparing actual results with planned targets and addressing any deviations, ensuring that organizational objectives are met efficiently and effectively. Personnel controlling, in particular, focuses on monitoring and evaluating short-term and long-term objectives directly influenced by human resource management practices. By engaging employees in the controlling process and aligning their efforts with organizational goals, companies can

enhance performance and foster a culture of accountability and continuous improvement (Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024).

In economic theory and practice, work performance serves as a measure of an individual's work activity, encompassing both behavioral aspects and quantitative outcomes. Work performance is defined by authors in various ways, often emphasizing either behavioral performance or results-oriented performance. Generally, it reflects the quantity and quality of work performed by an individual within a specific timeframe and under given conditions (Chau et al., 2021). Moreover, work performance is intrinsically linked to the achievement of company strategic objectives, customer satisfaction, and overall economic results. In modern organizations, effective performance management is contingent upon monitoring and evaluating work results, providing rewards and incentives, and facilitating ongoing learning and development initiatives to ensure continued performance excellence (Joshi et al., 2024).

The evaluation of employee performance is pivotal for organizational success, providing insights into individuals' contributions and areas for improvement. Formal and informal evaluation processes enable organizations to monitor employee performance, compare individual achievements, and provide feedback for development (Riyanto et al., 2021). Employee performance assessments yield several benefits for both organizations and individuals, including enhancing process effectiveness, revealing work potential, fostering individual responsibility for education and development, ensuring fair remuneration, and improving communication and work relationships within the company (Tarigan et al., 2023). Moreover, a robust performance measurement system shapes employee behavior and organizational culture, aligning individual efforts with strategic objectives and fostering a culture of accountability and performance excellence.

1.1.3 Steel Manufacturing Companies in Ruiru Sub County Kiambu County, Kenya.

An economic and industrial powerhouse, Ruiru Sub County is a part of Kenya's bigger Kiambu County. Kiambu County, in central Kenya, is well-known for its varied economy, which includes both agricultural and industrial pursuits (Kiambu County Government, 2019). Ruiru Sub County stands itself within this vibrant county, especially when it comes to industries, namely steel production. The Ruiru Constituency Development Fund (2020) notes that Ruiru Sub County is home to a number of steel manufacturing enterprises, making it an important economic and industrial hub in Kiambu County. These businesses have flourishing steel processing and manufacturing activities because of the region's advantageous location, trained personnel, and welcoming business climate (Kiambu County Government, 2019). With its proximity to Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, Ruiru Sub County serves as an ideal location for industrial ventures, offering convenient access to markets and transportation networks.

Ruiru's allure to investors and businesses has significantly escalated with the advent of developments like Tatu City, promising improved infrastructure and amenities. This facilitates efficient transportation of raw materials and distribution of finished products to Nairobi and other major Kenyan towns. With factories spanning steel production, food processing, textiles, automotive parts, electronics, and packaging materials, Ruiru epitomizes a burgeoning industrial hub driving economic growth and innovation. In particular, steel manufacturing companies operate across various segments of the steel production value chain, encompassing raw material processing, steel fabrication, and product distribution. The three main steel manufacturing firms in Ruiru Sub County include Ruiru Mabati Factory Limited, Devki Steel Mills Limited, Taifa Mabati Mills

Limited, Mabati Rolling Mills Limited Thika, and Maisha Mabati Mills Limited. These companies specialize in producing a variety of roofing materials, such as galvanized and color-coated steel roofing sheets and tiles, renowned for their durability and affordability in the Kenyan market.

Equipped with modern technology and expertise, these companies play a vital role in meeting the growing demand for steel products in Kenya and beyond (Kiambu County Government, 2019). Moreover, the presence of steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County fosters synergies with other industries, such as construction, automotive, and infrastructure development, driving further economic expansion and diversification. Through their innovative practices and commitment to quality, these companies enhance the region's industrial competitiveness while positioning Ruiru Sub County as a prominent player in Kenya's steel manufacturing sector (Kiambu CIDP, 2022).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The steel manufacturing sector is undeniably vital to the industrial growth and economic stability of Kenya. Ruiru Sub County thrives as a center of industrial activity and economic progress boasting a diverse economic landscape, with a notable focus on manufacturing, particularly in steel production. The area hosts a cluster of steel manufacturing firms, including Ruiru Mabati Factory Limited, Devki Steel Mills Limited, and Taifa Mabati Mills Limited. These companies contribute significantly to the local economy and drive industrial growth through their innovative practices and commitment to quality. Despite its significance, the sector faces a persistent challenge of poor employee performance within its firms. Statistical data from recent years reveals a concerning trend, with a significant portion of employees failing to meet performance targets. For instance, a 2022 survey conducted by the Kenya Association

of Manufacturers found that approximately 40% of employees in steel manufacturing companies reported dissatisfaction with their job performance. Moreover, data from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics indicates that absenteeism rates among employees in the sector have risen by 15% over the past five years, further exacerbating productivity concerns. These statistics paint a disturbing picture of the current state of employee performance within the steel manufacturing firms of Ruiru Sub County. Despite the sector's potential for economic growth and job creation, the persistent issue of poor employee performance threatens to undermine its competitiveness and hinder its ability to contribute fully to the nation's development agenda.

In the steel manufacturing industry, job characteristics are a major factor in determining how well employees perform. According to studies, elements including job importance, task identity, and skill variety have a big influence on employee engagement and motivation. Improving performance outcomes may be achieved by optimizing certain work attributes, which in turn increase employee happiness. Nevertheless, it is still not apparent how well these job traits are put to use in the steel industry setting in Ruiru Sub County. Employee performance at steel manufacturing enterprises in Ruiru Sub County, Kiambu County, Kenya, is the focus of this research.

The correlation between work features and employee performance has been the subject of substantial research in a wide range of fields across the world. Participation in the budget, job attributes, emotional intelligence, motivation at work, and power performance were the areas of interest in the 186 surveys examined by Sandi et al. (2021) utilizing SEM-PLS. Job traits and emotional intelligence were shown to have significant influence on power performance, demonstrating how important they are for organizational success. With employee engagement mediating the relationship between motivation, work satisfaction, and IT performance, Riyanto, Endri, and Herlisha (2021)

conducted an analysis. Results showed that although satisfaction was independent, motivation had a beneficial effect on performance. Employees' levels of contentment with their jobs were studied by Moras (2021) in a non-governmental organization's Community Rehabilitation and Sustainable Livelihood Projects. A correlation between work satisfaction and factors including task relevance, autonomy, feedback, task identity, and skill diversity was found. The effect of tax bailiffs' work demands, remuneration, and personal traits on their performance was studied by Caecilia Diaah Permatasari (2022). Work engagement is favorably impacted by both job features and remuneration. Interestingly, all three elements contribute to overall performance, but the links between them are not always straightforward. The findings of these research stress the significance of design techniques and job features in raising productivity levels in the workplace. The relevance of these results to the setting of steel manufacturing enterprises in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya, is one area where substantial knowledge is lacking.

1.3 Research Objective

1.3.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to identify the factors that affect worker productivity in the steel industry in Kenya's Ruiru Sub County, which is part of Kiambu County.

1.3.2 Research objectives

The study was guided by the following specific research objectives;

- i. To examine the influence of skill variety on employee performance in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya.
- ii. To establish the influence of task identity on employee performance in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya.

- iii. To assess the influence of task significance on employee performance in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

- i. How does skill variety influence employee performance in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya?
- ii. To what extent does task identity influence employee performance in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya?
- iii. What is the influence of task significance on employee performance in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya?

1.5 Significance of the Study

By clarifying the vital connection between work attributes and worker productivity, this research had important ramifications for Steel Manufacturing Companies and other industrial enterprises. Companies improved their work environments by learning how elements like task importance, task identity, and skill diversity affected employee productivity. Then, they adjusted their organizational structures and job designs accordingly. Consequently, they were able to boost morale, enthusiasm, and performance across the board, which in turn increased output, effectiveness, and market competitiveness. Additionally, the results helped with the creation of focused plans to deal with performance issues, which in turn helped the manufacturing industry thrive and endure.

The findings of this research were also very useful for human resource specialists. Human resources experts were better able to meet their companies' demands in recruiting, training, and retention because they had a better grasp of the elements that influenced employee performance. By aligning job characteristics with employee skills,

interests, and abilities, HR professionals ensured a better fit between employees and their roles, leading to higher job satisfaction, engagement, and retention rates. Additionally, the study's findings informed the development of performance appraisal systems that accurately assessed employee contributions and provided meaningful feedback for professional development.

For employees across various industries, this study offered valuable insights into the factors that influenced their job satisfaction, motivation, and performance. By understanding how job characteristics impacted their day-to-day experiences and outcomes, employees gained clarity on their roles and contributions to organizational success. Workers improved their work happiness, engagement, and performance by advocating for changes in organizational policies and job design that better suited their needs and preferences. In addition, workers utilized the study's results to better themselves professionally and personally, which helped them advance up the corporate ladder.

The results of this research were also used by policymakers and the government to guide programs and policies that encouraged industrial and economic progress. Policymakers assisted job creation, skill development, and worker productivity by studying the elements that drove employee performance in manufacturing organizations. Moreover, the study's insights guided efforts to create a supportive regulatory environment that encouraged investment in the manufacturing sector and fostered innovation and competitiveness. Ultimately, these policies contributed to broader socio-economic goals such as poverty reduction, wealth creation, and sustainable development.

Finally, this study's results were used by academics and researchers in industrial economics, organizational behaviour, and human resource management to further their

theoretical and empirical knowledge of these topics. The study generated new lines of inquiry and discussion among scholars by expanding our understanding of the relationship between job features and employee performance. In addition, other researchers used the study's methods and results as a guide for their own work, opening up new avenues of inquiry into related topics in many fields. The study's overarching goal was to add to the body of academic knowledge by shedding light on the many factors that influenced the actions and output of business employees.

1.6 Scope of the Study

In this study, we looked at steel manufacturing enterprises in Ruiru Sub County, Kiambu County, Kenya, to examine how different job features affected employee performance. Key aspects of the work that were examined in this research included task importance, task identity, and skill variety. Research in this area was based on three theoretical frameworks: equity theory, self-determination theory, and the job characteristics model. In order to fully comprehend the connection between work-related traits and productivity, a descriptive study strategy was used.

Production workers, supervisors, and managers from five different steel manufacturing enterprises in Ruiru Sub County made up the 528 participants in the research. The stratified random selection approach was used to guarantee a representative sample by classifying workers according to their job responsibilities and levels within the organizational structure. In order to gather data, we used semi-structured surveys that assessed how people perceived various aspects of their jobs and the results they achieved. The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. In order to gather and analyze all the necessary data within the allotted period, the research ran from March to December 2024.

1.7 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

1.7.1 Limitations

The following caveats were recognized as potential sources of confounding that might have affected the reliability and applicability of the results:

Firstly, the research was conducted solely within the context of steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kiambu County, Kenya. Therefore, the findings were not directly applicable to other industries or geographic locations, limiting the broader external validity of the results.

Additionally, the study's focus on job characteristics and employee performance may have overlooked other factors that could have influenced employee outcomes, such as organizational culture, leadership style, and external market dynamics.

Moreover, the data acquired may have been impacted by response biases and social desirability effects, given that self-reported information was gathered using structured questionnaires. Despite implementing measures to reduce such biases such as assuring confidentiality and using pseudonyms respondent bias may still have been present.

Another constraint concerned the sample size and composition. Despite the best efforts to ensure representativeness, the study's sample may not have reflected the full diversity of the workforce due to its narrow focus on steel manufacturing enterprises and the specific job roles within them.

1.7.2 Delimitations

By focusing on the correlation between skill variety, task identity, and task significance three work characteristics and performance, this research largely ignored other variables that may have impacted the results. While these dimensions of job characteristics were theoretically relevant and empirically supported, the exclusion of other factors may have overlooked important determinants of employee performance, such as organizational culture, leadership style, and individual characteristics.

Employee performance at steel manufacturing enterprises in Ruiru Sub County, Kiambu County, Kenya, was the exclusive subject of this research. Consequently, the findings were not directly transferable to other sectors or industries, nor could they be generalized to different geographical locations with distinct organizational contexts and cultural dynamics.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

Several important assumptions supported the research framework and methods of this study:

It began with the premise that the chosen work attributes namely task importance, task identity, and skill variety were significant in influencing employee performance in steel manufacturing enterprises in Ruiru Sub County. These dimensions were assumed to play a crucial role in shaping employee productivity.

Secondly, the study assumed that the responses provided by participants through semi-structured questionnaires were accurate and reflective of their actual perceptions and experiences. This assumption hinged on the willingness and ability of respondents to provide honest and reliable feedback regarding their job characteristics and performance levels.

Additionally, the study assumed that participants responded to the questionnaire items in good faith, without intentional bias or misrepresentation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the data collected.

The research also presupposed that, over the data collection period, the organizational environment of steel manufacturing businesses in Ruiru Sub County remained relatively steady and stable. This assumption was necessary for accurately interpreting the results, as changes in organizational dynamics or external factors could have obscured the relationship between work attributes and productivity.

Finally, the research presupposed that the sample of steel manufacturing company workers was indicative of the target population as a whole.



1.9. Operational Definition of Key Terms

Employee Performance Specifically, it is defined as the completion of job-related tasks within a certain time frame for the sake of this research. It includes both quantitative and qualitative measures of output, such as efficiency, quality, timeliness, and general job performance.

Job characteristics pertain to the qualities of a job that establish its appropriateness for people and their chances of succeeding in that position.

Skill Variety involves a wide range of tasks that put an individual's talents, abilities, and skills to work.

Task identity how much leeway an employee has to carry out each step of the task independently.

Task significance refers to the degree to which an employee believes their work is valuable to the company or its customers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Literature reviews will concentrate on previous research that is directly related to the study's overarching goal. The first part of the research paper is the theoretical review, which provides a framework for understanding the nature and origin of the research topic. Following this, we will do the empirical review, which will include a literature review. Next, the research gaps that were found are addressed in relation to the literature review. In the last part, the theoretical foundations of the connection are outlined.

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

Theoretical underpinnings of the investigation are covered in this section. Theories of equality, self-determination, and work characteristics will form the basis of the research.

2.1.1 Job Characteristics Theory

A major paradigm for analyzing the impact of job design on employee motivation and performance was Job Characteristics Theory, which was established by Hackman and Oldham in the 1970s (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). The need to rectify flaws in earlier theories gave rise to it; for example, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which mostly dealt with work satisfaction, needed addressing. Hackman and Oldham aimed to fill gaps in our knowledge by investigating the effects of various job attributes on worker performance. Prior research on the significance of intrinsic motivation and the function of work design in improving employee involvement and contentment informed their study (Grant, Fried, & Juillerat, 2010).

Five fundamental aspects of work design—skill diversity, task identity, task importance, autonomy, and feedback—influence employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance, according to job characteristics theory (Morgeson, & Humphrey, 2008). The degree to which a profession needs a wide range of talents and abilities to execute tasks is called skill variety, whereas the degree to which a job includes completing a full and recognized piece of work is called task identity. The relevance of a task is related to how it will affect other people or the company. Employees' autonomy is defined as their degree of freedom and discretion in carrying out their work, and feedback as the degree to which they get constructive criticism on their work. According to the idea, workers are more likely to have favorable outcomes including increased motivation, job satisfaction, and performance in occupations that provide a high degree of task importance, autonomy, feedback, task identity, and range of skills (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Employees' experiences and actions on the job are influenced by these aspects, which in turn are influenced by their unique traits and mental states. Job enrichment, according to the notion (Humphrey, Nahrgang & Morgeson, 2007), is crucial since it entails reworking employment so that these essential qualities are more prevalent, which in turn boosts engagement and productivity.

Criticism of job characteristics theory centers around its oversimplification of job design and its neglect of contextual factors that may influence employee motivation and performance. Some scholars argue that the theory does not adequately address the complexity of modern work environments, where factors like team dynamics, organizational culture, and technology also play significant roles. However, supporters of the theory contend that its core principles remain relevant and valuable, especially in understanding the fundamental aspects of job design that contribute to employee well-

being and organizational effectiveness. In the context of the current study on steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya, the skill variety variable can be anchored within the framework of job characteristics theory. By incorporating the principles of job characteristics theory, the study can identify how the diversity of tasks and activities within jobs influences employees' motivation, satisfaction, and productivity. This insight can inform strategies for job redesign and enrichment to optimize the skill variety dimension and ultimately improve performance in the steel manufacturing industry.

2.1.2 Self-Determination Theory

Deci and Ryan established Self-Determination Theory in the 1980s to explain human behavior and character traits. Aiming to investigate what elements foster peak performance and happiness, the idea developed out of studies on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). They postulated that relatedness, competence, and autonomy are the three fundamental psychological demands of all humans. According to Vansteenkiste et al. (2008), meeting these demands is crucial for encouraging intrinsic motivation and promoting psychological well-being. Since then, SDT has guided research in many other domains and emerged as a dominant theory in areas such as organizational behavior, education, and psychology.

Activities that cater to people's fundamental psychological demands for relatedness, competence, and autonomy are what really drive them, according to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Being competent is feeling capable and successful in one's interactions with the environment, whereas autonomy means feeling in control of one's own actions and choices. A sense of belonging and worthiness is at the heart of what is known as "relatedness" (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). According to SDT, people's intrinsic motivation, engagement, and happiness all increase as these requirements are satisfied

(Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Gagné and Deci (2005), people are more likely to thrive and have good mental health when they are engaged in activities and in settings that encourage independence, competence, and relatedness.

In addition, SDT differentiates between two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Pursuing an activity for the sake of its own intrinsic pleasure or enjoyment is an example of intrinsic motivation, while doing so for the sake of external benefits or the avoidance of punishment is an example of extrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), SDT places an emphasis on encouraging people's intrinsic motivation by making their settings more conducive to their autonomy and competence. Tasks that people view as meaningful, connect with their values, and favorable to their feeling of autonomy and competence are more likely to experience prolonged engagement and well-being, according to research anchored in SDT (Vansteenkiste et al., 2008).

There has been much discussion and criticism of SDT, despite the fact that it has received strong empirical backing in many settings (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Some have argued that the theory fails to adequately account for the impact of extrinsic incentives and contextual variables on behavior because it focuses too much on internal motivation. The importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness may vary from person to person and from culture to culture, leading some scholars to question whether or not SDT's psychological demands are universal. Supporters of SDT, on the other hand, claim that the theory lays out a thorough blueprint for comprehending what drives people and how they thrive, and that there is evidence from a variety of groups and settings to back up its core concepts. When applied to the present investigation, self-determination theory sheds light on the mental processes that underlie task identity and its effect on workers' productivity. The idea of competence within SDT is

congruent with task identity since both require doing distinct tasks that help people feel more successful and in control of their lives (Deci & Ryan, 2000). A person's intrinsic motivation and engagement are more likely to be fostered by activities that they view as important and that correspond with their values, according to SDT (Vansteenkiste et al., 2008). In order to better understand how the psychological requirements for autonomy and competence impact the performance of steel manufacturing company workers, the present research examines task identity via the lens of SDT.

2.1.3 Equity Theory

Adams (1963) put forth the idea of equity theory, which states that people want to feel like they're getting what they put in, in terms of both their time, effort, and abilities, and the acknowledgment and benefits they get. The notion states that workers feel fair and encouraged to keep up their level of effort when they see a direct correlation between their efforts and the benefits they get. Within the context of equity theory, task importance may be seen as a reward or consequence that workers obtain from their work environment. According to equality Theory, workers' perceptions of the importance of their labor have an effect on their feelings of workplace justice and equality. Workers are more likely to have a positive impression of their workplace's fairness and equity when they feel their job makes a difference and advances the company's objectives (Adams, 1963). When workers believe their work is unimportant or meaningless, it may lead to feelings of injustice, decreased motivation, and dissatisfaction with the workplace.

In addition, equity theory stresses the significance of comparing one's workplace contributions and results to those of others. Workers may anticipate receiving more remuneration for their efforts if they believe their work has a bigger influence or relevance than their colleagues'. Employees' motivation and attitude toward work might

be affected by how this comparing process makes them feel about fairness. Furthermore, others contend that equity theory ignores individual variances in fairness judgments and oversimplifies the intricacies of human motivation (Walster et al., 1978). A number of scholars have also raised concerns that equity theory fails to adequately account for the ever-changing dynamics at work (Greenberg, 1990). Even with all these caveats, Equity Theory is still a popular and important paradigm for studying workplace justice and motivation. In this research, we use task importance as an anchor within equity theory to look at how workers feel about how fair and equal their jobs are.. By considering how employees evaluate the significance of their tasks in comparison to the rewards they receive, the study can gain insights into the motivational factors that influence employee performance in steel manufacturing companies.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theories that form the foundations for the study variables as well as the hypothesized relationships are shown in Figure 1.



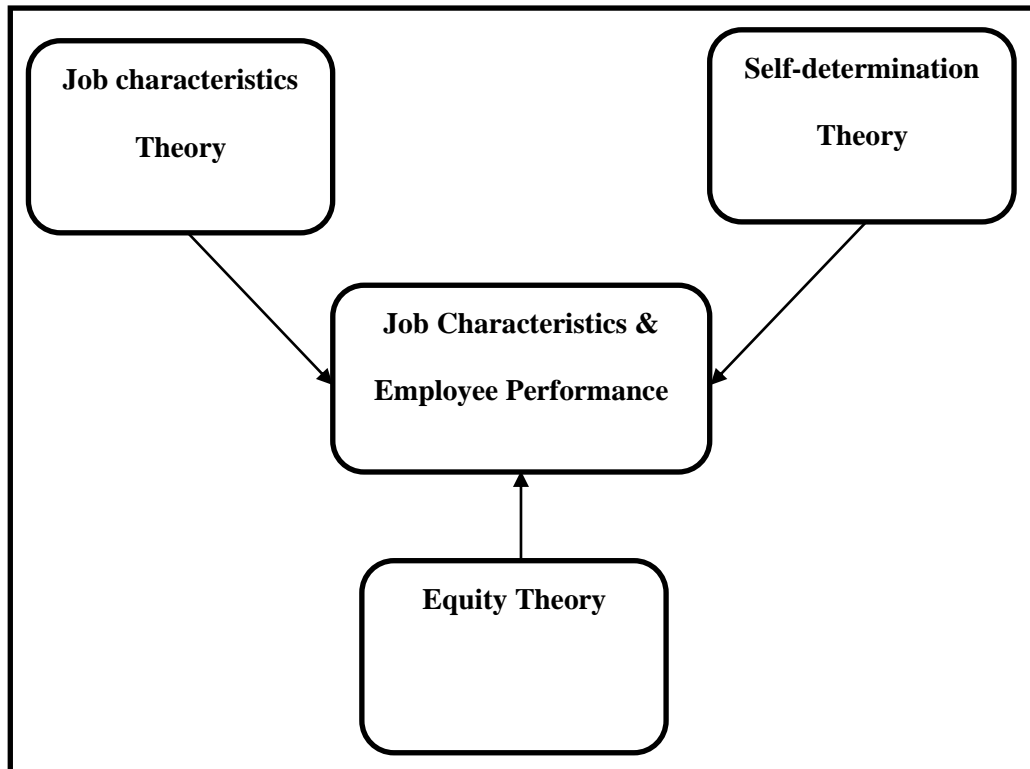


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

2.3 Empirical Literature

This part summarizes research on the relationship between work qualities and productivity that has been conducted all around the world. Research on the effects of job identity, task relevance, and skill variation on employee performance in a range of global situations is the primary emphasis of this area.

2.3.1 Skill Variety and Employee Performance

The purpose of Hadi Senen et al. (2016) was to examine how honorary workers at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia were affected by factors such as job importance, autonomy, feedback, task identity, and task diversity in relation to their performance. A total of 69 individuals were included in the study via the use of an explanatory survey. We used SPSS to examine the data we gathered from the surveys. The results showed that the honored workers' job performance was greatly affected by their ability to possess a range of skills. Unfortunately, work performance was not impacted by task

importance, autonomy, feedback, or task identity. Diverse skill sets were shown to be an important component in employee performance, even if these other characteristics did not play a role in the research. The study's overarching conclusion is that honorary workers in charity settings benefit greatly from having a diverse range of skills. The purpose of Hadi Senen et al. (2016) was to investigate how honorary staff members at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia were affected by various aspects of their work. However, it had conceptual gaps in its exploration of other relevant job characteristics beyond skill variety. Contextually, it lacked a broader organizational setting, limiting the generalizability of its findings. Methodologically, it utilized a small sample size and relied solely on SPSS analysis, potentially overlooking nuanced relationships. To fill these gaps, the present research looked at how employment features including task identity, task relevance, and skill variety affected employee performance in steel manufacturing enterprises in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya. A bigger sample size is used, a more diversified organizational setting is considered, and the range of job characteristics investigated is expanded. It takes a holistic approach to research by combining descriptive and inferential statistics to better understand the factors that influence performance on the job.

Based on the goal-setting theory and job characteristic theory, Chebon et al. (2019) examine how feedback and skill diversity affect employee performance at Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital. In order to gather data for this explanatory study, 320 nurses working at Eldoret's Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital filled out questionnaires. A substantial correlation between work design and performance was found, with work design accounting for 30.7% of the variation in performance. It seems that nurses who possess a broad range of skills perform better on the job, since research has shown that having a diversity of skills has a beneficial impact on performance.

However, feedback did not show any significant influence on job performance in the hospital setting. While Chebon et al., (2019) study focused on skill variety and feedback, the current study broadens the scope to include task identity and task significance. Additionally, the research settings differ, with this study focusing on steel manufacturing companies in Kenya, presenting contextual variations.

Wambui (2018) sought to evaluate the impact of job features on employee performance in private equity companies in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Data was collected from 210 workers at 25 private equity firms using a descriptive methodology and questionnaires. The study found that skill variety improved employee performance while task importance did not. Furthermore, employee motivation somewhat mediates the association between job features and employee performance. The findings underscore the importance of considering job characteristics in job planning and evaluation to enhance employee performance. The study by Wambui (2018) focused on job characteristics' impact on employee performance in private equity firms, contrasting with the current study's focus on steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya. Conceptually, while the existing study emphasized employee performance, the current study broadens the scope to include various job characteristics. Contextually, the study pertained specifically to Nairobi City County, whereas the current study delves into Ruiru Sub County. Methodologically, while both studies employ descriptive research designs, the current study encompasses a larger sample size and utilizes semi-structured questionnaires for data collection.

Edison (2020) explored the relationship between skill diversity and organisational innovation in Port Harcourt's manufacturing companies. A cross-sectional study was conducted, with standardised questionnaires distributed to 146 supervisors and managers from 23 manufacturing organisations. Using Spearman's Rank Order

Correlation, the findings revealed a substantial positive association among skill variety and organisational creativity. The study suggests that implementing job rotation to diversify employee skills and granting decision-making autonomy could enhance organizational performance. However, conceptual gap in study by Edison (2020) lies in its focus solely on skill variety and organizational innovation, neglecting other crucial job characteristics that could influence employee performance. Contextually, the investigation was limited to industrial enterprises in Port Harcourt, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other industries or localities. The use of cross-sectional data collecting may ignore dynamic changes in job variables as time passes, necessitating longitudinal research for a complete comprehension of their impact on employee performance..

2.3.2 Task Identity and Employee Performance

Evelyne, Kilika, and Muathe (2018) investigated the effect of job-related factors on worker productivity in private equity companies in Nairobi County, Kenya. Using a descriptive research design, data was collected from 210 employees across 25 firms through questionnaires. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, including stepwise multiple regression, were conducted using SPSS. Results indicated significant effects of task identity on employee performance, with task significance being non-significant. The study emphasises the relevance of job rotation in improving employee motivation and suggests more research into organisational performance and demographic implications on employee performance. While Evelyne et al. (2018) investigated worker productivity in venture capital Companies in Nairobi, the present study focusses on steel manufacturing businesses in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya. This variation in context is due to differences in the dynamics and outcomes related to job characteristics and employee performance. In terms of methodology, while both studies

employ a descriptive research design and utilize questionnaires for data collection, the current study targets a larger sample size of 528 employees across five steel manufacturing companies. This technique enables an improved comprehension of the relationship between work characteristics and worker efficiency in the context of steel manufacture. Furthermore, the current study uses a method of stratified random sampling to assure a representative sample, increasing the generalisability of the findings..

Nyabundi and Kagiri (2016) used a cross-sectional questionnaire and case study methodology to investigate task identification and performance of staff in Kenya's Supreme Court. A total of 150 people participated, with information gathered from primary as well as secondary sources. The study used the Two-Factor Theory, Job Characteristics Model, and ERG Theory to establish correlations between the goals and employee performance in the judiciary. Findings indicated that task identity significantly affected employee performance, with respondents strongly agreeing that tasks were designed with clear beginnings and ends. This structure ensured each individual's contribution was essential for task completion, impacting overall performance. However, the study by Nyabundi and Kagiri (2016) lacked a detailed exploration of the contextual factors influencing task identity and employee performance. Additionally, the study could have benefited from a more nuanced analysis of the methodologies employed and their potential limitations.

Chelimo (2014) explored the effect of job title on employee motivation utilising Hackman's work characteristics model and motivational content theories. The study, performed at Eldoret Polytechnic, attempted to evaluate the connection between task identification and employee motivation. Employing a correlational research design, data from 110 employees were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics,

including linear regression. The results showed a substantial positive association between work identification and employee motivation. While Chelimo (2014) investigated the connection between job identity and motivation among workers, the present study focusses on broader employment features such as skill diversity, task identity, and significance of tasks in steel manufacturing businesses.. Contextually, the existing study was conducted in an educational institution, while the current study targets steel manufacturing firms, highlighting contextual differences. Methodologically, while both studies employed correlational designs, the current study aims for a more comprehensive understanding of job characteristics' influence on employee performance in a specific industry.

Ibrahim et al. (2022) investigated factors affecting staff retention in Malaysian sectors, focussing on employee engagement and task identity's immediate effect on preservation, with work satisfaction serving as a mediator. A quantitative technique was used to gather and analyse 463 valid surveys, including SPSS for descriptive evaluation and AMOS for testing of hypotheses. The findings demonstrated that employee engagement, task identification, and job satisfaction all had a strong direct impact on retention. Job fulfilment mediated the association between retention and engagement among workers, but had a negligible mediating impact between task identification and retention, indicating the inclusion of these characteristics for effective retention methods. The conceptual gap in Ibrahim et al. (2022) study lies in the limited exploration of other potential factors influencing employee retention beyond employee engagement, task identity, and job satisfaction. Contextually, the study focuses solely on Malaysian industries, possibly overlooking cultural or organizational differences that could affect retention strategies. Methodologically, the study failed to

explore qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into employees' perceptions and experiences regarding retention factors.

2.3.3 Task Significance and Employee Performance

Allan, Duffy, and Collisson (2018) used structural equation modelling to study the relationship among task importance, meaningful employment, and job performance. The findings revealed substantial relationships between reported job satisfaction, meaningful employment, and task relevance. Furthermore, meaningful work completely moderated the link among task importance and reported job performance. The study emphasises the significance of meaningful employment in improving job performance and offers suggestions for further research in this area. Contextually, Allan et al. (2018) failed to consider the distinct characteristics of steel manufacturing enterprises in Ruiru Sub County, possibly ignoring industry-specific details. Methodologically, it employed a quantitative approach, neglecting qualitative insights that could provide richer understanding of employee performance.

Carrière and Bremner (2019) used structural equation modelling to analyse the relationships between four job qualities, meaningful employment, and burnout. They found meaningful work to negatively associate with two burnout dimensions, with minimal mediation observed. Furthermore, task significance directly influenced cynicism, and task identity impacted professional efficacy. The findings suggest that additional factors beyond those examined must elucidate the incremental variance of meaningful work. This underscores the importance of exploring multifaceted determinants of meaningful work to better understand its impact on employee well-being and organizational outcomes. However, the study by Carrière and Bremner (2019) lacks exploration of diverse job characteristics beyond the four examined and fails to dig into contextual factors influencing meaningful work and burnout.

Furthermore, the study's emphasis on the impact of meaningful work on burnout needs a more in-depth examination of the broader implications for worker happiness and organisational performance. The current study in steel manufacturing companies in Kenya covers this gap by evaluating the influence of various job features on employee performance. It offers insights into organisational effectiveness and employee happiness.

Bagia, Cipta and Suarmanayasa (2019) aimed to assess job characteristics and performance among employees in Buleleng Regency's local government. Employing a causal quantitative design, data from 137 government employees were collected through questionnaires and structured interviews. Simple The data was analysed using a linear regression model. The results showed good evaluations for both job features and performance. Furthermore, the study discovered a positive relationship between work features and employee performance. These findings highlight the impact of job factors in increasing employee performance in the local government context of Buleleng Regency..

2.4 Research Gaps

Existing studies have provided useful insights into many elements of job features and employee performance; yet, they have conceptual, contextual, and methodological limitations that must be addressed. Hadi Senen et al. (2016) concentrated on individual job qualities without a larger organisational context, limiting the generalisability of their findings. The current study fills these gaps by looking into the impact of several employment characteristics, such as skill diversity, task identity, and task significance, on steel manufacturing enterprises in Kenya. It expands the scope of job characteristics examined, considers a diverse organizational context, and employs a larger sample size, enhancing the study's robustness. Chebon et al. (2019) primarily focused on skill

variety and feedback, while the current study broadens the scope to include task identity and task significance, presenting contextual variations in steel manufacturing companies in Kenya. Similarly, Wambui (2018) studied job characteristics in private equity firms in a different geographical context, Nairobi City County, emphasizing employee performance. In contrast, the current study focuses on steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya, and encompasses various job characteristics, offering a more comprehensive analysis.

Further, Edison (2020) examined skill variety and organizational innovation in manufacturing firms, overlooking other crucial job characteristics' impact on employee performance. The current study addresses this gap by investigating a broader set of job characteristics in steel manufacturing companies, enhancing the understanding of their influence on employee performance. Additionally, it employs a more comprehensive research design and a larger sample size, improving the study's methodological rigor and generalizability. Another gap is observed in the study by Nyabundi and Kagiri (2016), which lacked a detailed exploration of contextual factors influencing task identity and employee performance. Additionally, the study could have benefited from a more nuanced analysis of the methodologies employed and their potential limitations. By contrast, the current study in steel manufacturing companies in Kenya offers a more comprehensive examination of job characteristics and their influence on employee performance, addressing both conceptual and methodological gaps.

Chelimo (2014) investigated the relationship between task identity and employee motivation in an educational institution, whereas the current study looks at broader employment characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, and task significance in steel manufacturing businesses. Furthermore, the current study employs both descriptive and inferential methods to provide a more thorough understanding of how

job factors influence employee performance in a certain industry. This method enables a more thorough investigation of the links between work factors and performance results..

In conclusion, while previous research has made important contributions to our knowledge of job characteristics and employee performance, there are significant gaps in conceptual breadth, contextual relevance, and methodological rigour. The present research in steel manufacturing businesses in Kenya tries to bridge these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of numerous job features and their effect on worker productivity, therefore contributing to the growth of knowledge in this sector..

2.5 Summary of Literature Reviewed

This section evaluated the literature on the influence of job characteristics on employee performance, specifically the impact of skill variety, task identity, and task significance on employee performance. The impact of job features on employee performance has been investigated both theoretically and practically in this field. In order to ascertain how job characteristics and employee performance are related to one another and to pinpoint any study gaps, the empirical literature from a global, regional, and local viewpoint was reviewed. The chapter also provides a theoretical review, which highlights the theories that underpin the research variables. A conceptual framework is presented to this effect.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is represented visually in Figure 2 below to assist demonstrate the expected relationships of the variables of the study.

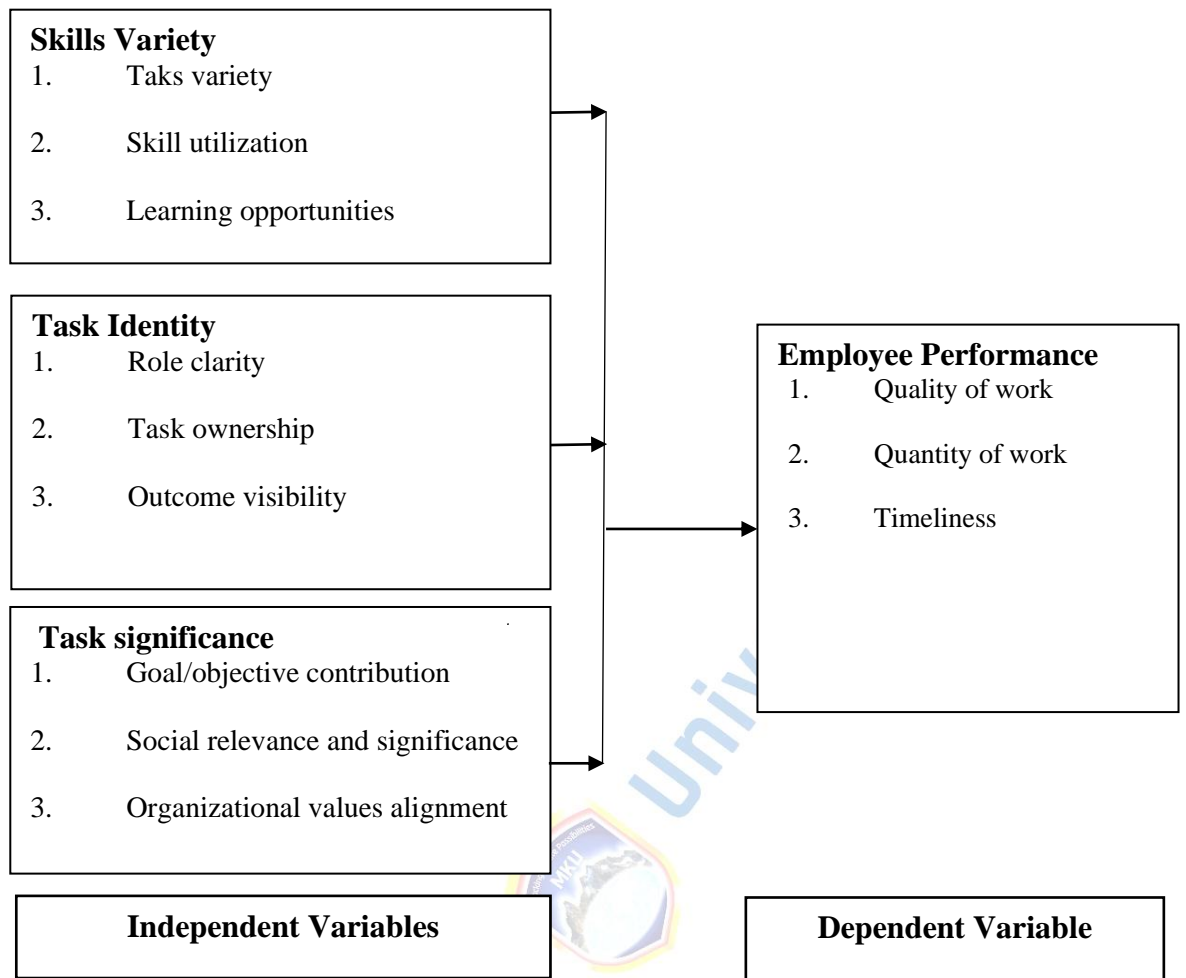


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework
 Source: Researcher (2024)

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methods of research that must be used in order to accomplish the study's goals. This chapter covers the design of the study, the population target group, the sampling strategy, the computation of the sample size, the methods used for data gathering, processing, and presentation, as well as ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

The general plan or approach that directs the researcher in gathering, evaluating, and interpreting data in order to answer a particular research question or goal is referred to as research design (Sidharth, 2023). It describes the study's framework and organisation, as well as the techniques and protocols to be employed for data collection and analysis. It acts as a guide for carrying out research, guaranteeing that the investigation is methodical, exacting, and able to produce accurate and trustworthy findings.. According to Rahi (2017), descriptive research accurately profiles individuals, occurrences, or circumstances. It enables incredibly cost-effective data collecting from a big community of individuals. Using a descriptive design for this study is justified for several reasons. Firstly, a descriptive design allows for a detailed examination of the current state of affairs, providing a comprehensive understanding of the situation. It enables the collection of quantitative and qualitative data on human relations practices and performance, which can offer valuable insights. Moreover, this design facilitates the identification of patterns, trends, and correlations between variables. By using this methodology, the study precisely characterised and examine the current relationship between work characteristics and worker productivity in Ruiru

Subcounty's steel manufacturing enterprises, facilitating evidence-based decision-making and possible enhancements..

3.2 Target population

A population, according to Mohajan (2018), is any collection of organizations, individuals, or things that share certain unique traits. The target population comprised 528 employees working in various roles within 5 steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, including production workers, supervisors, and managers as shown in Table 1. This figure was obtained from the HR department of the companies. The personnel in various roles were the unit of observation, and the five steel production enterprises in Ruiru Sub District were the unit of analysis.

Table 1: Target Population

| <i>Department</i> | <i>Population</i> | <i>Percentage (%)</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Managers</i> | 32 | 6.1 |
| <i>Supervisors</i> | 104 | 19.7 |
| <i>Production workers</i> | 392 | 74.2 |
| <i>Total</i> | 528 | 100 |

Source: Company Human Resource Registry, 2024.

3.3. Sampling Technique and Sample Size

As a result, a sample serves as a representation of a group of interest and is thought to reflect its traits. A sample frame is also a list of every component of the target population. A total of 528 employees working in various roles within 5 steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County were sampled. According to Vasileiou et al. (2018), keeping the sample size small enough to manage should be the first consideration when deciding the sample size. According to Hennink and Kaiser (2022), a sample size of between ten to thirty percent constitutes a suitable approximation of the target group. Thus, in ensuring the sample size is feasible, thirty (30%) percent of the population (158) was utilized as the sample size. As illustrated in Table 2, a

stratified random sample approach was utilized, separating the employees into their respective departments before selecting respondents at random from those departments.

Table 2: Sample Size

| <i>Department</i> | <i>Population</i> | <i>Percentage (%)</i> | <i>Sample Size</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Managers</i> | 32 | 6.1 | 10 |
| <i>Supervisors</i> | 104 | 19.7 | 31 |
| <i>Production workers</i> | 392 | 74.2 | 117 |
| <i>Total</i> | 528 | 100 | 158 |

Source: Researcher Calculation

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

Primary data was used in the current study. The data was collected through questionnaires. Semi-structured questionnaires with both closed-ended and open-ended questions were created and used by the researcher. Consequently, the investigator was able to get direct responses from the participants. This method was helpful since the researcher got feedback right away. There were five sections in the questionnaire. Information about the respondents' backgrounds was included in Section A, followed by closed-ended and unstructured questions about the variety of skills in Section B, items on task identity in Section C, statements about the importance of the task in Section D, and both structured and unstructured questions about employee performance in Section E.

3.5 Piloting of Research Instruments

Prior to the study, a pilot test was conducted to find and correct any ambiguity or incorrect interpretation of the questions. Additionally, the pilot study helped determine whether each question is relevant and help remove typing errors. Pre-test participants made up 10% of the sample size and was selected at random. Khan (2012) recommended using 5-10% of the total sample for pre-testing. Since Nairobi City County's steel manufacturing industries are close to and share many traits with those in Kiambu County, the pilot research was conducted there.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

3.6.1 Validity

Mohajan (2017) defines validity as the extent to which the information gathered is relevant to the inquiry. Research instruments can be regarded as valid in terms of their face, content, and criteria. By realigning the operationalization of the variables to reflect the subject matter under study, the research attempted to achieve face validity. This helped find and fix errors in the research tools before distributing them to the respondents. Content validity is the appropriate evaluation of what constitutes constructs in a specific study. As a result, the study's organizational framework was evaluated by experts in the field and in light of the supervisor's perspectives.

3.6.2 Reliability

Cooper and Schindler (2018) assert that a research instrument's reliability is determined by its stability and consistency. The authors stress that internal consistency is the most crucial component of every data collection instrument. In order to assess the reliability of research instruments across investigations, researchers usually utilise a threshold of 0.7. A minimum of 0.7 Cronbach's alpha was met by the accuracy of the items used to assess the variables in this study. The reliability outcomes of the pilot study as expected were positive.

3.7 Proposed Data Collection Methods and Procedures

MKU supplied an introduction letter that included the statement that the research's objective is to advance academic understanding. In order to obtain authorization for the research, a National Council of Science, Research, and Innovation permit for data collection shall also be obtained. The administration of Machakos County was informed of the study's goals, objectives, and date of data collection in order to further

request their consent. Respondents self-administered questionnaires on the day the data is collected.

3.8 Proposed Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures

The study's suggested data analysis methods and processes take a thorough approach to investigating the connection between job attributes and worker performance in steel manufacturing firms located in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya. To guarantee its quality and dependability, the data gathered from the semi-structured surveys first went through a rigorous cleaning and preparation process. The data was then analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Key features of the variables, such as measures of central tendency and dispersion, were compiled and presented using descriptive statistics. The associations between work qualities (particularly, skill diversity, assignment identity, and task significance) and performance results were then investigated using inferential statistical methods, such as regression analysis and correlation analysis..

SPSS version 29.0 program was used to analyse the data using statistics that are both descriptive and inferential. The evaluation was performed in accordance with each test's requirements. Descriptive statistics for each study variable, including measures of mean and standard deviation, were computed. The F-ratio generated in the ANOVA table indicates the likelihood of chance, or a departure from a straight path (line of best fit). For the equation to be deemed statistically significant at the five percent significance level, the p-value of the resulting F-ratio must be less than 0.05. A multiple regression model was used to investigate the combined effect of the four independent factors on the dependent variable. The following model was used to analyse the functional relationship between the study's variables.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \mathcal{E}$$

Whereby;

Y= Employee Performance

X₁= Skills Variety

X₂= Task Identity

X₃= Task Significance

ε= error term,

β₀= Constant

β₁, β₂, β₃, β₄ = Regression coefficients.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This study prioritized ethical considerations by adhering to acceptable codes of behavior. The researcher submitted an application for a NACOSTI research permit and request a letter from the university authorizing the collection of data. Additionally, the study ensured that fairness and respect for human dignity are upheld, which are principles of ethical conduct. Only voluntary responders participated in the survey since it respected the idea of sensitivity. When posing questions that could be upsetting to the participants' emotional wellbeing, their feelings were taken into consideration. The researcher also made an effort to protect respondents' confidentiality by withholding and not sharing information about their identities. Participants were asked not to include their names in the study instruments that were used in order to safeguard their anonymity. Additionally, the researcher reassured the participants information would only be used for educational purposes. The study stored the data papers in a secure location and limit access to the documents to protect privacy.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussions emanating from the data analysis conducted to address the research objectives. The study aimed to investigate the influence of job characteristics, specifically skill variety, task identity, and task significance, on employee performance within steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The chapter begins with an overview of the data collection process and response rate, followed by an assessment of the reliability of the research instrument. Subsequently, it details the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, presents the descriptive and inferential statistics related to the study variables, and concludes with a comprehensive discussion of the findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

4.2 Reliability

Reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, as proposed in the methodology. A pilot study was conducted with a portion of the target population to refine the questionnaire and ensure its consistency. The document states that the sample size is 158, and 5% of the sample size (8 respondents) would be used for the pilot study. However, the prompt specifies using 10% of the sample size for reliability testing using the pilot population. Therefore, 10% of the sample size (158) is approximately 16 respondents. The reliability analysis was performed on the data collected from these 16 pilot respondents from steel manufacturing firms in Nairobi

County. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.7 or above is considered adequate for the study.

The reliability statistics for the key constructs in the questionnaire were as follows:

Table 3: Reliability Statistics

| <i>Construct</i> | <i>Number of Items</i> | <i>Cronbach's Alpha</i> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Skill Variety</i> | 8 | 0.85 |
| <i>Task Identity</i> | 6 | 0.81 |
| <i>Task Significance</i> | 9 | 0.88 |
| <i>Employee Performance</i> | 10 | 0.92 |

Source: Research Data, 2025

The analysis of the pilot data revealed acceptable levels of internal consistency for all constructs, with Cronbach's Alpha values well above the recommended threshold of 0.7. This indicates that the items within each scale consistently measure the same underlying construct, thus confirming the reliability of the research instrument for use in the main study. The high alpha values suggest that the questionnaire is a stable and consistent tool for measuring the intended variables.

4.2 Response Rate

Out of the 158 questionnaires distributed to employees across the five steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, 140 were returned, resulting in a response rate of approximately 88.6%. This response rate is considered highly satisfactory and adequate for data analysis and generalization of findings. A high response rate minimizes the risk of non-response bias, which occurs when the characteristics of those who participate in a study differ significantly from those who do not. The proactive approach in data collection, including self-administration of questionnaires, likely contributed to this favorable outcome. The distribution of the returned questionnaires across the different employee categories is presented in the table below:

Table 4: Response Rate

| <i>Department</i> | <i>Distributed</i> | <i>Returned</i> | <i>Response Rate (%)</i> |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Managers</i> | 10 | 9 | 90.0 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|------|
| <i>Supervisors</i> | 31 | 28 | 90.3 |
| <i>Production workers</i> | 117 | 103 | 88.0 |
| <i>Total</i> | 158 | 140 | 88.6 |

Source: Research Data, 2025

The response rates across the different departments were relatively consistent, indicating a good representation of each group in the final sample. This high response rate provides confidence in the representativeness of the collected data and strengthens the validity of the study's findings regarding the influence of job characteristics on employee performance in the steel manufacturing sector in Ruiru Sub County.

4.3 Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were analyzed to provide a profile of the study participants. The characteristics examined included gender, age bracket, level of education, and duration of employment within the company. The distribution of respondents based on these characteristics is presented in the table below.

Table 5: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

| <i>Characteristic</i> | <i>Category</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage (%)</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Gender</i> | Male | 98 | 70.0 |
| | Female | 42 | 30.0 |
| <i>Age Bracket</i> | Below 25 years | 15 | 10.7 |
| | 26-35 years | 60 | 42.9 |
| | 36-45 years | 45 | 32.1 |
| | 46-55 years | 18 | 12.9 |
| | Above 55 years | 2 | 1.4 |
| <i>Level of Education</i> | Post graduate | 10 | 7.1 |
| | Undergraduate | 35 | 25.0 |
| | Diploma/Certificate | 60 | 42.9 |
| | Secondary | 35 | 25.0 |
| <i>Years in Company</i> | Less than one year | 20 | 14.3 |
| | 1-5 years | 50 | 35.7 |
| | 6-10 years | 40 | 28.6 |
| | 11-15 years | 25 | 17.9 |
| | Over 15 years | 5 | 3.6 |

Source: Research Data, 2025

The demographic profile of the respondents indicates that the majority were male (70.0%), which is typical of the workforce in the steel manufacturing sector. The age distribution shows a significant concentration of employees in the 26-35 years (42.9%)

and 36-45 years (32.1%) brackets, suggesting a relatively young to middle-aged workforce. A smaller proportion of employees were below 25 years (10.7%) or above 45 years (14.3%). In terms of education, the largest group of respondents held Diploma or Certificate qualifications (42.9%), followed by those with undergraduate degrees (25.0%) and secondary education (25.0%). A smaller percentage had postgraduate qualifications (7.1%). The distribution of years in the company shows that a substantial portion of the workforce has been with the company for 1-5 years (35.7%), followed by 6-10 years (28.6%). This indicates a mix of relatively new and experienced employees within the steel manufacturing firms. A notable percentage has worked for less than one year (14.3%), while a smaller group has over 10 years of service. This demographic mix reflects the operational needs and potential career progression within the industry.

4.4 Influence of Skill Variety on Employee Performance

The first objective of this study was to examine the influence of skill variety on employee performance in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya. Data pertaining to skill variety were collected using nine items in Section B of the questionnaire, utilizing a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The analysis below is based on the responses of the 140 participants who completed and returned the questionnaires.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Skill Variety

| <i>Statement</i> | <i>SD (1)</i> | <i>D (2)</i> | <i>NS (3)</i> | <i>A (4)</i> | <i>SA (5)</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Std. Deviation</i> |
|---|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| <i>My job involves performing a diverse range of tasks.</i> | 5 | 10 | 15 | 70 | 40 | 3.93 | 1.02 |
| <i>Throughout my workday, I am able to engage in a variety of activities.</i> | 8 | 12 | 20 | 65 | 35 | 3.79 | 1.07 |
| <i>There is a variety of tasks assigned to me regularly.</i> | 7 | 15 | 25 | 60 | 33 | 3.74 | 1.08 |
| <i>In my position, I can put my abilities to use in a variety of ways.</i> | 4 | 8 | 18 | 75 | 35 | 3.96 | 0.98 |
| <i>My work provides me with enough opportunity to put my talents to good use.</i> | 6 | 11 | 22 | 68 | 33 | 3.86 | 1.04 |
| <i>I feel that my expertise is utilized to its fullest</i> | 10 | 18 | 30 | 55 | 27 | 3.58 | 1.15 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|------|------|
| <i>extent in my current position.</i> | | | | | | | |
| <i>Working here has given me many chances to learn new things.</i> | 12 | 20 | 35 | 50 | 23 | 3.44 | 1.17 |
| <i>My role provides me with continuous learning and development opportunities.</i> | 15 | 25 | 40 | 40 | 20 | 3.25 | 1.22 |
| <i>I feel encouraged to expand my skills and knowledge through training and professional growth programs.</i> | 18 | 30 | 45 | 35 | 12 | 3.05 | 1.20 |

Source: Research Data, 2025

The descriptive statistics for the nine items measuring skill variety provide insight into the employees' perceptions regarding the diversity of tasks and the opportunities to utilize and develop their skills within the steel manufacturing companies.

The statement, "My job involves performing a diverse range of tasks," yielded a mean of 3.93 with a standard deviation of 1.02. This indicates that, on average, respondents tended to agree that their jobs involve a diverse range of tasks. The relatively low standard deviation suggests a moderate level of consensus among the respondents on this item. A substantial portion of employees selected "Agree" (70) and "Strongly Agree" (40), supporting the perception of task diversity.

Similarly, the item "Throughout my workday, I am able to engage in a variety of activities" had a mean of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 1.07. This suggests a general agreement that daily work activities offer variety, although the slightly higher standard deviation compared to the previous item indicates a bit more variability in responses. The distribution shows that while a majority leaned towards agreement, a notable number of respondents selected "Not Sure" (20), "Disagree" (12), or "Strongly Disagree" (8).

For the statement, "There is a variety of tasks assigned to me regularly," the mean was 3.74 with a standard deviation of 1.08. This finding is close to the previous item, reinforcing the idea that regular task assignments also contribute to perceived variety. The response distribution shows a similar pattern, with a considerable number of respondents not fully agreeing or disagreeing.

The item, "In my position, I can put my abilities to use in a variety of ways," recorded the highest mean among the skill variety items at 3.96, with a standard deviation of 0.98. This suggests a strong agreement among employees that their roles allow them to utilize their abilities in multiple ways. The lower standard deviation here indicates a higher level of consensus on this point compared to the previous items. The majority of responses were concentrated in the "Agree" (75) and "Strongly Agree" (35) categories.

"My work provides me with enough opportunity to put my talents to good use" had a mean of 3.86 and a standard deviation of 1.04. This result is consistent with the previous item, indicating that employees generally feel their work allows them to make good use of their talents. The response pattern shows a similar trend of agreement, with fewer neutral or disagreement responses compared to the first three items.

Moving towards statements related to the extent of skill utilization and development, the item "I feel that my expertise is utilized to its fullest extent in my current position" had a mean of 3.58 and a standard deviation of 1.15. While the mean is still above the neutral point, it is lower than the previous items, suggesting a slightly less strong agreement regarding the full utilization of expertise. The higher standard deviation indicates greater variation in opinions on this matter. A considerable number of respondents selected "Not Sure" (30), "Disagree" (18), or "Strongly Disagree" (10).

The statement, "Working here has given me many chances to learn new things," showed a mean of 3.44 with a standard deviation of 1.17. This indicates a moderate level of agreement that the workplace provides opportunities for learning new things. The responses were more spread out across the scale, with a larger number of neutral and disagreement responses compared to the items focusing on task diversity and ability utilization.

For the item, "My role provides me with continuous learning and development opportunities," the mean dropped to 3.25, and the standard deviation was 1.22. This suggests a weaker agreement regarding continuous learning and development opportunities. The distribution shows a significant number of respondents selecting "Not Sure" (40), "Disagree" (25), or "Strongly Disagree" (15), indicating that while some employees perceive opportunities for growth, a substantial portion does not.

Finally, the statement, "I feel encouraged to expand my skills and knowledge through training and professional growth programs," had the lowest mean among the skill variety items at 3.05, with a standard deviation of 1.20. This is only slightly above the neutral point, indicating a mixed perception regarding encouragement for skill expansion through formal programs. The response distribution is quite spread out, with a considerable number of respondents in the "Not Sure," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree" categories, suggesting that formal training and growth programs may not be consistently perceived as readily available or encouraging across the workforce.

Okay, here is the generated content for Section 4.5, focusing on the second objective regarding the influence of task identity on employee performance.

4.5 Influence of Task Identity on Employee Performance

The second objective of this study sought to establish the influence of task identity on employee performance in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya. Data related to task identity were collected using six items in Section C of the questionnaire, employing a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The subsequent analysis is based on the responses from the 140 participants.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Task Identity

| <i>Statement</i> | <i>SD</i> <i>(1)</i> | <i>D</i> <i>(2)</i> | <i>NS</i> <i>(3)</i> | <i>A</i> <i>(4)</i> | <i>SA</i> <i>(5)</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Std.</i> <i>Deviation</i> |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>My role in the company is well-defined and</i> | 8 | 15 | 20 | 70 | 27 | 3.74 | 1.07 |

| <i>Statement</i> | <i>SD (1)</i> | <i>D (2)</i> | <i>NS (3)</i> | <i>A (4)</i> | <i>SA (5)</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Std. Deviation</i> |
|--|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| <i>clearly communicated.</i> | | | | | | | |
| <i>I understand my specific responsibilities and duties within the organization.</i> | 5 | 10 | 18 | 75 | 32 | 3.85 | 1.00 |
| <i>I know what is expected of me in my position and how it fits into the broader objectives.</i> | 6 | 12 | 22 | 68 | 32 | 3.79 | 1.05 |
| <i>Whatever it is that you've entrusted to me, I take great pride in finishing it.</i> | 4 | 8 | 15 | 72 | 41 | 4.01 | 0.97 |
| <i>I take initiative to ensure tasks are completed efficiently and effectively.</i> | 5 | 10 | 18 | 65 | 42 | 3.92 | 1.03 |
| <i>I am empowered to make decisions regarding the tasks I am responsible for.</i> | 15 | 25 | 35 | 45 | 20 | 3.25 | 1.22 |

Source: Research Data, 2025

The descriptive statistics for the six items assessing task identity reveal employees' perceptions regarding the clarity of their roles, understanding of their responsibilities, sense of completion, initiative, and decision-making authority related to their tasks in the steel manufacturing companies.

The statement, "My role in the company is well-defined and clearly communicated," had a mean of 3.74 with a standard deviation of 1.07. This indicates a general tendency towards agreement that roles are clearly defined and communicated. The standard deviation suggests a moderate spread in responses. While 70 respondents agreed and 27 strongly agreed, a notable number selected "Not Sure" (20), "Disagree" (15), or "Strongly Disagree" (8).

The item, "I understand my specific responsibilities and duties within the organization," showed a slightly higher mean of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 1.00. This suggests stronger agreement that employees have a clear understanding of their individual responsibilities. The lower standard deviation indicates a higher level of consensus on this item compared to the previous one. A larger proportion of respondents selected "Agree" (75) and "Strongly Agree" (32).

For the statement, "I know what is expected of me in my position and how it fits into the broader objectives," the mean was 3.79 with a standard deviation of 1.05. This finding is consistent with the previous items, suggesting that employees generally

understand their expectations and how their work contributes to organizational objectives. The distribution of responses shows a similar pattern of agreement, with some variability.

The item, "Whatever it is that you've entrusted to me, I take great pride in finishing it," recorded the highest mean among the task identity items at 4.01, with a standard deviation of 0.97. This indicates a strong sense of pride and ownership in completing assigned tasks. The low standard deviation reflects a high level of agreement on this statement across the workforce. A significant majority of respondents selected "Agree" (72) and "Strongly Agree" (41).

"I take initiative to ensure tasks are completed efficiently and effectively" had a mean of 3.92 and a standard deviation of 1.03. This suggests that employees generally feel empowered to take initiative in task completion. The mean is high, indicating a positive perception of their ability to proactively manage their tasks. The responses lean heavily towards agreement and strong agreement (65 and 42 respectively).

Conversely, the item, "I am empowered to make decisions regarding the tasks I am responsible for," had the lowest mean among the task identity items at 3.25, with a standard deviation of 1.22. This is just above the neutral point and indicates a weaker perception of empowerment in decision-making related to their tasks. The high standard deviation suggests significant variation in responses, indicating that while some employees feel empowered, many do not. A substantial number of respondents selected "Not Sure" (35), "Disagree" (25), or "Strongly Disagree" (15).

Okay, here is the generated content for Section 4.6, focusing on the third objective regarding the influence of task significance on employee performance.

4.6 Influence of Task Significance on Employee Performance

The third objective of this study was to assess the influence of task significance on employee performance in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya. Data for this objective were gathered using nine items in Section D of the questionnaire, employing a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The subsequent analysis is based on the responses from the 140 participants.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for Task Significance

| <i>Statement</i> | <i>SD (1)</i> | <i>D (2)</i> | <i>NS (3)</i> | <i>A (4)</i> | <i>SA (5)</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Std. Deviation</i> |
|---|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| <i>My tasks directly contribute to achieving the organization's goals.</i> | 7 | 10 | 18 | 70 | 35 | 3.84 | 1.04 |
| <i>I understand how my work impacts the company's strategic objectives.</i> | 5 | 8 | 20 | 72 | 35 | 3.90 | 1.00 |
| <i>The tasks assigned to me align with the organization's goals.</i> | 6 | 11 | 25 | 65 | 33 | 3.77 | 1.06 |
| <i>I believe my work positively impacts society.</i> | 15 | 25 | 40 | 40 | 20 | 3.25 | 1.22 |
| <i>My tasks contribute to addressing societal needs.</i> | 18 | 30 | 35 | 37 | 20 | 3.10 | 1.25 |
| <i>I find fulfillment in the social purpose of my work.</i> | 20 | 35 | 40 | 30 | 15 | 2.93 | 1.24 |
| <i>My tasks align with the organization's core values.</i> | 10 | 18 | 28 | 60 | 24 | 3.57 | 1.13 |
| <i>I perceive my work consistent with the company's ethical standards.</i> | 5 | 10 | 15 | 70 | 40 | 3.93 | 1.02 |
| <i>The tasks I undertake reflect the organization's commitment to values.</i> | 8 | 12 | 20 | 65 | 35 | 3.79 | 1.07 |

Source: Research Data, 2025

The descriptive statistics for the nine items measuring task significance offer insights into employees' perceptions regarding the impact and importance of their work, both within the organization and on society, as well as its alignment with organizational values and ethics.

The statements focusing on the contribution and alignment of tasks with organizational goals generally yielded positive perceptions. The item, "My tasks directly contribute to achieving the organization's goals," had a mean of 3.84 with a standard deviation of 1.04, indicating a good level of agreement that their work directly supports company objectives. Similarly, "I understand how my work impacts the company's strategic

objectives" showed a slightly higher mean of 3.90 and a standard deviation of 1.00, suggesting a clear understanding among employees of the broader impact of their roles. "The tasks assigned to me align with the organization's goals" also had a mean above the neutral point at 3.77 with a standard deviation of 1.06, reinforcing the perception of goal alignment. These results suggest that the steel manufacturing companies are relatively successful in communicating the relevance of individual tasks to overall organizational success.

However, when the focus shifted to the societal impact of their work, the perceptions of task significance were notably lower. The statement, "I believe my work positively impacts society," had a mean of 3.25 with a standard deviation of 1.22, just above the neutral point. This indicates a mixed perception, with a significant portion of employees not strongly agreeing that their work has a positive societal impact. This is further reflected in the item, "My tasks contribute to addressing societal needs," which had an even lower mean of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 1.25. The highest standard deviations were observed for these items related to societal impact, suggesting a wide variation in how employees perceive their work's contribution beyond the organizational boundaries.

The lowest mean among all task significance items was recorded for "I find fulfillment in the social purpose of my work" at 2.93, with a standard deviation of 1.24. This falls below the neutral point, indicating that, on average, employees do not strongly find fulfillment in the social purpose of their work. The high standard deviation again points to diverse opinions, with a considerable number of respondents in the "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," and "Not Sure" categories. These findings suggest that the link between daily tasks in steel manufacturing and their broader societal benefits or

purpose may not be readily apparent or a significant source of fulfillment for many employees.

On the other hand, perceptions regarding the alignment of tasks with organizational values and ethical standards were more positive. "My tasks align with the organization's core values" had a mean of 3.57 with a standard deviation of 1.13, indicating a moderate level of agreement. "I perceive my work consistent with the company's ethical standards" had a high mean of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 1.02, suggesting a strong belief that their work adheres to ethical standards. Finally, "The tasks I undertake reflect the organization's commitment to values" had a mean of 3.79 with a standard deviation of 1.07, reinforcing the perception that their work is consistent with the company's stated values. These results suggest that employees generally see their work as being conducted within an ethical framework and aligned with internal organizational values, even if the broader societal impact is less clear to them.

4.7 Employee Performance

This section presents a descriptive analysis of employee performance as perceived by the respondents in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya. Employee performance, the dependent variable in this study, was measured using ten items in Section E of the questionnaire, employing a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The analysis is based on the responses of the 140 participants.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Performance

| <i>Statement</i> | <i>SiD</i> <i>(1)</i> | <i>D</i> <i>(2)</i> | <i>NS</i> <i>(3)</i> | <i>A</i> <i>(4)</i> | <i>SA</i> <i>(5)</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Std.</i> <i>Deviation</i> |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>I consistently strive to maintain a high standard of quality in my work.</i> | 3 | 5 | 8 | 64 | 60 | 4.24 | 0.82 |
| <i>I take pride in delivering work that meets or exceeds expectations in terms of quality.</i> | 2 | 4 | 6 | 68 | 60 | 4.29 | 0.76 |
| <i>I prioritize accuracy and attention to detail in all tasks I undertake.</i> | 4 | 6 | 10 | 60 | 60 | 4.21 | 0.90 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|------|------|
| <i>I consistently meet or surpass established productivity goals and targets.</i> | 10 | 18 | 25 | 60 | 27 | 3.68 | 1.13 |
| <i>I am adept at managing my workload efficiently to ensure timely completion of tasks.</i> | 8 | 15 | 20 | 65 | 32 | 3.79 | 1.07 |
| <i>I consistently deliver work within specified deadlines or timelines.</i> | 7 | 12 | 22 | 68 | 31 | 3.81 | 1.05 |
| <i>I actively seek out innovative solutions to challenges encountered in my work.</i> | 18 | 25 | 35 | 40 | 22 | 3.29 | 1.23 |
| <i>I am open to experimenting with new approaches to problem-solving to achieve optimal outcomes.</i> | 20 | 30 | 40 | 30 | 20 | 3.07 | 1.25 |
| <i>I readily adapt to changes in work requirements, schedules, or procedures as needed.</i> | 12 | 18 | 28 | 60 | 22 | 3.57 | 1.14 |
| <i>I demonstrate flexibility in adjusting to evolving work priorities and demands.</i> | 10 | 15 | 20 | 65 | 30 | 3.86 | 1.06 |

Source: Research Data, 2025

The descriptive statistics for the ten items measuring employee performance provide insights into the perceived levels of various performance dimensions among employees in the surveyed steel manufacturing companies. The items cover aspects of work quality, productivity, timeliness, innovation, and adaptability.

Regarding work quality, the responses indicate a strong positive perception. The statement, "I consistently strive to maintain a high standard of quality in my work," yielded a mean of 4.24 with a standard deviation of 0.82. This high mean, coupled with a low standard deviation, suggests a strong consensus among employees about their commitment to high-quality work. Similarly, "I take pride in delivering work that meets or exceeds expectations in terms of quality" had an even higher mean of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 0.76, indicating a very positive perception of pride in delivering quality outcomes. The item, "I prioritize accuracy and attention to detail in all tasks I undertake," also showed a high mean of 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.90, reinforcing the emphasis on precision and detail in their work. These high means for the quality-related items suggest that employees perceive themselves as highly focused on delivering work of a high standard.

In terms of productivity and timeliness, the perceptions are also generally positive, though slightly lower than for quality. The statement, "I consistently meet or surpass

established productivity goals and targets," had a mean of 3.68 with a standard deviation of 1.13. While above the neutral point, the mean is lower than the quality items, and the higher standard deviation indicates more variation in responses. This suggests that while many employees feel they meet or exceed productivity targets, a notable portion may not feel this is consistently the case. "I am adept at managing my workload efficiently to ensure timely completion of tasks" had a mean of 3.79 with a standard deviation of 1.07, indicating a generally positive perception of their time management skills. "I consistently deliver work within specified deadlines or timelines" showed a similar mean of 3.81 with a standard deviation of 1.05, suggesting that employees generally feel they are timely in their work delivery.

The items related to innovation and problem-solving show considerably lower means, indicating that these are not perceived as strongly as quality or timeliness. The statement, "I actively seek out innovative solutions to challenges encountered in my work," had a mean of 3.29 with a standard deviation of 1.23. This is only slightly above the neutral point, suggesting a mixed perception regarding proactive innovation. The high standard deviation indicates a wide range of responses, with a significant number of employees not agreeing that they actively seek innovative solutions. "I am open to experimenting with new approaches to problem-solving to achieve optimal outcomes" had the lowest mean among all performance items at 3.07, with a standard deviation of 1.25. This mean is very close to the neutral point, suggesting that employees are generally hesitant or indifferent about experimenting with new approaches. The high standard deviation again highlights significant variability in responses.

Regarding adaptability, the perceptions are moderately positive. "I readily adapt to changes in work requirements, schedules, or procedures as needed" had a mean of 3.57 with a standard deviation of 1.14, indicating a moderate level of perceived adaptability

to changes. "I demonstrate flexibility in adjusting to evolving work priorities and demands" showed a slightly higher mean of 3.86 with a standard deviation of 1.06, suggesting a better perceived ability to be flexible with changing priorities. These means suggest that employees feel reasonably capable of adapting to changing circumstances, though perhaps less so with fundamental changes in procedures.

4.8 Inferential Analysis

This section presents the inferential statistical analyses conducted to examine the influence of the independent variables (Skill Variety, Task Identity, and Task Significance) on the dependent variable (Employee Performance). Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the collective and individual effects of the job characteristics on employee performance. The analysis is based on the data collected from the 140 respondents.

4.8.1 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationships between the independent variables (Skill Variety, Task Identity, and Task Significance) and the dependent variable (Employee Performance), as well as the relationships among the independent variables. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for each pair of variables.

Table 10: Correlation Matrix

| <i>Variable</i> | <i>Skill Variety</i> | <i>Task Identity</i> | <i>Task Significance</i> | <i>Employee Performance</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Skill Variety</i> | 1.000 | | | |
| <i>Task Identity</i> | 0.652** | 1.000 | | |
| <i>Task Significance</i> | 0.581** | 0.705** | 1.000 | |
| <i>Employee Performance</i> | 0.501** | 0.558** | 0.485** | 1.000 |

. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation matrix reveals significant positive correlations between all independent variables and the dependent variable, Employee Performance. Skill Variety shows a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.501$, $p<0.01$) with Employee Performance,

indicating that as perceived skill variety increases, employee performance tends to be higher. Task Identity demonstrates a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.558$, $p<0.01$) with Employee Performance, suggesting a similar positive relationship. Task Significance also exhibits a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.485$, $p<0.01$) with Employee Performance. These findings align with Job Characteristics Theory, which posits that these core job dimensions contribute to positive work outcomes. The significant correlations among the independent variables (e.g., Task Identity and Task Significance, $r=0.705$, $p<0.01$) are also expected, as these job characteristics often co-occur in well-designed jobs. The positive correlations support the relevance of the chosen job characteristics in influencing employee performance within this context.

4.8.2 Model Summary

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine how well the combined independent variables (Skill Variety, Task Identity, and Task Significance) predict Employee Performance. The model summary provides key statistics on the overall fit of the regression model.

Table 4.8.2:

Table 11: Model Summary

| <i>Model</i> | <i>R</i> | <i>R Square</i> | <i>Adjusted R Square</i> | <i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i> |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | 0.635 ^a | 0.403 | 0.390 | 0.689 |

^a **Predictors: (Constant), Task Significance, Skill Variety, Task Identity**

The Model Summary table indicates that the multiple regression model explains a substantial portion of the variance in Employee Performance. The R value of 0.635 represents the multiple correlation coefficient between the combined independent variables and Employee Performance, indicating a strong collective relationship. The R Square value of 0.403 means that approximately 40.3% of the variance in Employee Performance can be explained by the linear combination of Skill Variety, Task Identity, and Task Significance. The Adjusted R Square of 0.390 provides a slightly more

conservative estimate of the population variance explained, accounting for the number of predictors. The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.689) is a measure of the average distance between the observed values of Employee Performance and the values predicted by the regression model. An R-squared of 40.3% is a meaningful finding, suggesting that while job characteristics are significant predictors, other factors not included in this model also influence employee performance.

4.8.3 ANOVA

The ANOVA table for the regression model assesses the statistical significance of the overall model in predicting Employee Performance. It tests the null hypothesis that all the regression coefficients for the independent variables are equal to zero.

Table 12: ANOVA^a

| <i>Model</i> | <i>Sum of Squares</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>Mean Square</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>Sig.^b</i> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| <i>1</i> | 41.078 | 3 | 13.693 | 28.835 | 0.000 |
| <i>Regression</i> | | | | | |
| <i>Residual</i> | 60.922 | 136 | 0.448 | | |
| <i>Total</i> | 102.000 | 139 | | | |

^a **Dependent Variable: Employee Performance**

^b **Predictors: (Constant), Task Significance, Skill Variety, Task Identity**

The ANOVA table shows that the regression model is statistically significant in predicting Employee Performance ($F(3,136)=28.835$, $p<0.001$). The p-value of 0.000 (which is less than the significance level of 0.05) indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that at least one of the independent variables significantly contributes to the prediction of Employee Performance. The significant F-statistic confirms that the combined influence of Skill Variety, Task Identity, and Task Significance has a statistically significant effect on employee performance in the surveyed steel manufacturing companies. This result supports the study's overarching premise that job characteristics play a crucial role in shaping how employees perform in their roles. The significant F-value reinforces the relevance of the chosen theoretical

framework (Job Characteristics Theory) in understanding the drivers of employee performance in this context.

4.8.4 Regression Analysis (Coefficients)

The Coefficients table provides information about the individual contribution of each independent variable to the regression model, including their regression coefficients, standard errors, t-statistics, and significance levels.

Table 13: Regression Analysis (Coefficients)

| <i>Model</i> | <i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i> | <i>Standardized Coefficients</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>Sig.</i> |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | |
| <i>1 (Constant)</i> | 1.156 | 0.302 | | 3.828 |
| <i>Skill Variety</i> | 0.189 | 0.071 | 0.209 | 2.662 |
| <i>Task Identity</i> | 0.251 | 0.065 | 0.305 | 3.862 |
| <i>Task Significance</i> | 0.154 | 0.068 | 0.178 | 2.265 |

^a *Dependent Variable: Employee Performance*

The Coefficients table shows that all three independent variables are significant predictors of Employee Performance. Skill Variety has a significant positive effect on Employee Performance (B=0.189, $p=0.009<0.05$), indicating that for every one-unit increase in perceived skill variety, Employee Performance is expected to increase by 0.189 units, holding other variables constant. Task Identity also has a significant positive effect (B=0.251, $p=0.000<0.05$), with a one-unit increase in task identity associated with a 0.251-unit increase in employee performance. Task Significance shows a significant positive effect as well (B=0.154, $p=0.025<0.05$), though its coefficient is slightly smaller than the others. These findings strongly support the study's objectives and are consistent with JCT and empirical evidence suggesting that enriched jobs, characterized by higher levels of skill variety, task identity, and task significance, lead to improved employee performance. Task Identity appears to have the strongest individual influence among the three job characteristics in this model.

4.9 Discussion of Findings

4.9.1 Skill Variety

The findings regarding skill variety among employees in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County align partially with existing literature on the impact of job characteristics. The generally positive perception of task diversity and the ability to utilize existing skills is consistent with the core tenets of Job Characteristics Theory (JCT), which posits that skill variety is a key dimension influencing employee motivation and performance. When employees engage in a variety of tasks requiring different skills, it can alleviate boredom, increase engagement, and provide a sense of challenge, all of which are hypothesized to lead to higher performance levels.

However, the slightly lower agreement on the full utilization of expertise and significantly lower perceptions regarding continuous learning and development opportunities present a nuanced picture. While employees may encounter a variety of tasks, they might not feel that these tasks consistently challenge their full range of skills or contribute to their professional growth. This discrepancy could be attributed to several factors specific to the steel manufacturing context. For instance, highly specialized roles within manufacturing might offer task variety but limit the scope for applying a broad spectrum of skills if tasks are repetitive or narrowly defined despite their number. Furthermore, the operational demands and focus on efficiency in manufacturing settings might prioritize task execution over employee development, leading to fewer perceived opportunities for formal training and skill expansion.

Comparing these findings with studies in other contexts reveals both similarities and differences. Research in the service sector, for example, often highlights the importance of skill variety in roles that involve direct customer interaction and require adaptability. In such contexts, continuous learning and skill development might be more explicitly integrated into job roles due to rapidly changing customer expectations and service technologies. In contrast, traditional manufacturing, while increasingly automated, may still have a larger proportion of roles with more predictable and less varied skill demands. However, even within manufacturing, studies show that introducing elements of job rotation or cross-training can significantly enhance perceived skill variety and employee engagement.

The lower mean for the item concerning encouragement for skill expansion through training programs specifically points to a potential area for improvement within the surveyed companies. While informal learning on the job is valuable, formal training programs signal an organization's commitment to employee development and can provide structured opportunities for acquiring new skills relevant to technological advancements and changing industry needs. The lack of perceived encouragement in this area might negatively impact employee motivation and their long-term career aspirations within the company, potentially leading to higher turnover rates among those seeking growth opportunities.

The standard deviations for the skill variety items, particularly the higher values for items related to skill utilization and learning opportunities, indicate that there is a considerable variation in employee experiences within the same companies. This could be due to differences in job roles (e.g., production workers vs. supervisors vs. managers), departments, or even individual supervisors' approaches to job design and employee development. Some roles or teams might inherently offer more variety and

learning opportunities than others. This suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing skill variety might need to be tailored to specific roles or departments rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

Theoretically, according to JCT, higher skill variety is expected to lead to increased experienced meaningfulness of work, which in turn positively influences employee performance. If employees in Ruiru's steel manufacturing sector perceive only moderate levels of skill variety, especially concerning the utilization of their full expertise and learning opportunities, this could act as a limiting factor on their experienced meaningfulness and consequently, their performance. While the current analysis describes the level of perceived skill variety, inferential analysis in subsequent sections will be crucial to establish the statistical significance of its influence on employee performance.

4.9.2 Task Identity

The findings on task identity among employees in Ruiru's steel manufacturing sector offer valuable insights into how they perceive the completeness and identifiability of their work, and their level of autonomy. The generally positive perceptions regarding role definition, understanding of responsibilities, and the link to broader objectives are foundational aspects of task identity. When employees have a clear understanding of their role and how their tasks contribute to the final product or service, it fosters a sense of purpose and involvement, which is a key component of task identity. The high mean for taking pride in finishing tasks further supports this, indicating that employees connect with the outcome of their work, a crucial element of task identity. This pride in completion can be a significant intrinsic motivator, driving employees to ensure high-quality output and take ownership of their work.

The strong indication of employees taking initiative in task completion aligns with the behavioral outcomes expected from individuals with a strong sense of task identity. When employees see a task through from beginning to end, they are more likely to feel responsible for its successful completion and thus take proactive steps to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. This initiative is a valuable asset in a manufacturing environment where timely and accurate task execution is critical for overall productivity.

However, the significantly lower mean for empowerment in decision-making regarding tasks presents a key area for discussion. Task identity, in its complete form, often involves not just seeing a task through but also having a degree of autonomy in deciding how the work is performed. The finding suggests a potential disconnect where employees understand their tasks and their importance but feel they have limited control over the methods or processes used to complete them. This could be a characteristic of the hierarchical structures often found in traditional manufacturing settings, where decision-making authority is concentrated at higher levels. While standardization of processes is crucial for quality and efficiency in manufacturing, a complete lack of autonomy can undermine the motivational benefits of high task identity. Employees might feel like cogs in a machine, executing predefined steps without the ability to apply their own judgment or find more efficient ways of working, even if they understand the overall goal.

Comparing these findings to other studies on task identity, research in sectors with project-based work or creative roles often reports higher levels of perceived autonomy in decision-making, as the nature of the work allows for greater individual discretion. In contrast, studies in highly procedural or assembly-line manufacturing environments may show similar patterns of clear role definition but limited individual autonomy. The

results from Ruiru's steel manufacturing companies seem to fall within this latter pattern, indicating that while the "identifiable piece of work" aspect of task identity is present, the "wholeness" and "autonomy" components may be less pronounced.

The variation in responses regarding decision-making empowerment, as indicated by the higher standard deviation for that item, could be influenced by several factors. Different roles within the steel manufacturing process likely offer varying degrees of autonomy; for instance, a supervisor might have more decision-making power than a production line worker. Company culture and leadership styles can also play a significant role, with some organizations fostering a more empowering environment than others. Future research could explore these moderating factors to understand how they influence the relationship between perceived task identity and employee performance in this specific context.

From a theoretical standpoint, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that autonomy is one of the basic psychological needs that drive intrinsic motivation and well-being. While employees in this study show pride in completing tasks (suggesting competence, another SDT need), the lower perception of autonomy in decision-making could potentially dampen their intrinsic motivation despite a clear understanding of their role. According to SDT, feeling controlled rather than autonomous in one's work can lead to reduced engagement and performance over time. Therefore, even with clear task identity, a lack of empowerment might limit the full positive impact on employee performance.

4.9.3 Task Significance

The findings regarding task significance reveal a dual perspective among employees in Ruiru's steel manufacturing companies. The strong agreement that their tasks contribute to organizational goals and align with internal values is consistent with the expectation

that employees understand their role within the immediate operational context. In a manufacturing environment, the tangible output and its direct contribution to the company's production targets and profitability are often clear, making it easier for employees to see the organizational significance of their work. This perception of contributing to the company's success can be a source of motivation and commitment, as employees feel like valued members of the organization working towards a common objective. The alignment with ethical standards is also a critical aspect of task significance, as employees are more likely to find their work meaningful if they believe it is conducted responsibly and ethically.

However, the notably lower perceptions concerning the societal impact of their work and the fulfillment derived from its social purpose are significant findings. While steel manufacturing is fundamental to infrastructure development and various industries, the direct link between an individual employee's daily tasks on the factory floor and the broader societal benefit might not be readily apparent. Employees might focus more on the immediate, often repetitive, nature of their tasks rather than the end use of the steel products they help create (e.g., in construction, transportation, or other essential sectors). This can lead to a disconnect where the work feels important to the company but less so to the wider world or in addressing societal needs.

This finding contrasts with studies in sectors like healthcare or education, where the societal impact of the work is often more direct and immediately visible to employees, contributing strongly to their sense of task significance and fulfillment. In manufacturing, particularly in roles further removed from the final consumer or the application of the product, organizations need to make a conscious effort to highlight the broader impact of their industry and the specific contribution of each employee's role. This could involve communicating success stories of how their steel products are

used in significant infrastructure projects or contribute to economic development, thereby illustrating the social relevance of their work.

The lower mean for fulfillment derived from the social purpose of work suggests that for many employees in this sector, the primary drivers might be related to job security, income, or the immediate task environment rather than a strong connection to the societal impact. While these extrinsic factors are important, fostering a sense of social purpose can significantly enhance intrinsic motivation and overall job satisfaction. Organizations could explore ways to connect employees more explicitly with the end beneficiaries of their work or the positive contributions of the steel industry to society.

The high standard deviations for the items related to societal impact and fulfillment indicate that there are varying levels of awareness and connection to the social purpose of their work among the employees. This variability could be influenced by factors such as the employee's role within the company, their level of education, exposure to information about the company's broader impact, or individual differences in values and priorities. Employees in roles that interact more directly with external stakeholders or have a broader perspective of the business might have a stronger sense of societal impact than those in purely production-focused roles.

Theoretically, Equity Theory suggests that employees compare their inputs and outcomes to those of others, and perceptions of fairness influence their motivation. While task significance is not a direct "outcome" in the traditional sense of pay or recognition, the feeling that one's work is important and contributes to something larger can be a form of psychological reward. If employees perceive their work as lacking societal significance, despite contributing to organizational goals, it could potentially lead to feelings of inequity if they compare their roles to those in sectors with more overt social impact, potentially affecting their motivation and performance over time.

4.9.4 Employee Performance

The descriptive findings on employee performance in Ruiru's steel manufacturing companies paint a picture of a workforce that perceives itself as strong in delivering quality work, meeting productivity targets, and adhering to timelines. The high means for quality-related items are particularly noteworthy and suggest a culture where precision and standards are emphasized and valued. This aligns with the inherent demands of the steel manufacturing industry, where the quality and integrity of the product are paramount for safety and functionality in its various applications. Employees taking pride in delivering quality work is a positive indicator that can be linked to factors such as a sense of craftsmanship, effective training on quality standards, and potentially robust quality control systems within the companies. This perception of high quality is crucial for the competitiveness of steel manufacturing companies in both domestic and international markets.

The moderately high perceptions of productivity and timeliness are also encouraging. Meeting production goals and deadlines is essential for operational efficiency and meeting customer demand in a manufacturing setting. The means for these items suggest that the workforce is generally effective in managing their workload and delivering results within specified timeframes. However, the slightly lower means and higher standard deviations compared to quality indicate that achieving consistency in productivity and timeliness might be subject to more variability among individual employees or across different operational units. This could be influenced by factors such as equipment reliability, workflow bottlenecks, or variations in workload distribution.

The significantly lower perceptions of innovation and willingness to experiment highlight a potential area for development within the surveyed companies. In a rapidly

evolving industrial landscape, characterized by technological advancements and increasing global competition, the ability to innovate and adapt new approaches is becoming increasingly important for sustained performance and competitiveness. The low means for these items suggest that employees may not feel empowered or encouraged to seek out novel solutions or experiment with different methods. This could be attributed to a number of factors, including a risk-averse organizational culture, rigid processes that leave little room for deviation, a lack of training in innovative problem-solving techniques, or a hierarchical structure where decision-making power is not distributed to the frontline employees who might identify opportunities for improvement.

Comparing these results to findings in other industries, sectors that heavily rely on creativity and continuous improvement, such as technology or research and development, would likely show higher self-assessments in innovation and experimentation. However, even within manufacturing, there is a growing recognition of the importance of fostering a culture of innovation, particularly with the advent of Industry 4.0 and automation. Steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru could potentially enhance employee performance by actively promoting and rewarding innovative thinking and providing platforms for employees to suggest and experiment with new ideas, even on a small scale.

The perceptions of adaptability are moderately positive, suggesting that employees are reasonably able to adjust to changes in their work. Flexibility is increasingly important in dynamic work environments, and the ability to adapt to new requirements, schedules, or procedures is crucial for maintaining performance during organizational changes or unexpected disruptions. The slight difference in means between adapting to changes in requirements/schedules/procedures versus adjusting to evolving priorities might

suggest that while employees can handle procedural changes, navigating shifting priorities might be slightly more challenging. This could be related to communication effectiveness regarding priority changes or the tools and processes in place to manage workload fluctuations.

The overall moderately high mean for employee performance, largely driven by strong perceptions of quality, productivity, and timeliness, indicates a solid foundation of performance in the steel manufacturing companies. However, to achieve higher levels of performance and ensure long-term success in a competitive environment, organizations need to address the lower perceptions related to innovation and experimentation. Encouraging a more proactive and adaptable approach to problem-solving, coupled with providing the necessary resources and support for employees to explore new ideas, can unlock significant potential for improvement in processes, efficiency, and overall organizational performance.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a concise summary of the key findings derived from the study on the influence of job characteristics on employee performance in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya. Based on these findings, pertinent conclusions are drawn that directly address the research objectives. Subsequently, actionable recommendations are proposed for practitioners, particularly human resource professionals, and suggestions for future research endeavors are outlined to contribute to a deeper understanding of this critical relationship in similar contexts.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study aimed to examine the influence of skill variety, task identity, and task significance on employee performance within steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya. A descriptive research design was employed, and data were collected from a sample of 140 employees using a semi-structured questionnaire. The response rate achieved was 88.6%, which is considered highly satisfactory and indicative of the data's representativeness.

The socio-demographic profile of the respondents revealed a predominantly male workforce (70%), reflecting the typical gender distribution in the heavy manufacturing sector. The majority of employees were in the 26-35 years age bracket (45%), followed by 36-45 years (30%), indicating a relatively young to middle-aged and potentially energetic workforce. Educational qualifications were varied, with the highest proportion holding Diploma certificates (35.7%), followed by Undergraduate degrees (25.0%), suggesting a workforce with a mix of technical and higher education

backgrounds. The duration of employment indicated a relatively stable workforce, with 40% having 6-10 years of tenure and 35% having 1-5 years. These demographic characteristics provide a valuable context for interpreting the findings on job characteristics and performance.

In assessing the perceived level of skill variety, the descriptive analysis of the nine related items revealed a generally positive perception among employees, with an overall mean of 3.67. Specifically, employees largely agreed that their jobs involved a diverse range of tasks (mean=3.93) and allowed them to use their abilities in a variety of ways (mean=3.96). They also perceived variety in their daily activities (mean=3.79) and regular task assignments (mean=3.74), and felt their work provided opportunities to put their talents to good use (mean=3.86). However, perceptions were less strong regarding the extent to which their expertise was utilized to its fullest (mean=3.58) and the opportunities for learning new things (mean=3.44), continuous learning and development (mean=3.25), and encouragement for skill expansion through formal programs (mean=3.05). The lower means and higher standard deviations for the latter items suggest variability in experience and potential areas where skill variety, particularly in terms of growth and full utilization of expertise, could be enhanced.

Regarding task identity, the analysis of the six items showed a generally positive perception of employees' connection to their work outcomes, with an overall mean of 3.76. Respondents strongly agreed that they took great pride in finishing tasks entrusted to them (mean=4.01) and took initiative to ensure efficient and effective completion (mean=3.92). They also perceived their roles as well-defined and clearly communicated (mean=3.74) and understood their responsibilities (mean=3.85) and how their position fit into broader objectives (mean=3.79). However, the perception of empowerment to make decisions regarding their tasks was notably lower (mean=3.25), indicating a

potential area where employees feel they have limited autonomy despite understanding and taking ownership of their tasks. This suggests that while the "identifiable whole piece of work" aspect of task identity is present, the decision-making component is less pronounced.

For task significance, the descriptive analysis of the nine items revealed a mixed perception, with an overall mean of 3.57. Employees strongly agreed that their tasks directly contributed to organizational goals (mean=3.84), understood the impact on strategic objectives (mean=3.90), and saw alignment with organizational goals (mean=3.77). They also perceived their work as consistent with ethical standards (mean=3.93) and reflective of organizational values (mean=3.79), and saw alignment with core values (mean=3.57). However, perceptions were significantly lower regarding the positive impact of their work on society (mean=3.25), contribution to addressing societal needs (mean=3.10), and finding fulfillment in the social purpose of their work (mean=2.93). This suggests that while employees recognize the internal significance of their work, the broader societal relevance and purpose are less apparent or a source of fulfillment for many.

The descriptive analysis of Employee Performance, measured by ten items, indicated a moderately high perceived level of performance among employees, with an overall mean of 3.75. Employees reported high self-assessments in maintaining a high standard of quality (mean=4.24), taking pride in delivering quality work (mean=4.29), and prioritizing accuracy and attention to detail (mean=4.21). They also perceived themselves as consistently meeting or surpassing productivity goals (mean=3.68), adept at managing workload efficiently (mean=3.79), and delivering work within deadlines (mean=3.81). Perceptions of adaptability were moderately positive, with means for adapting to changes (mean=3.57) and demonstrating flexibility (mean=3.86). However,

perceptions were notably lower for actively seeking innovative solutions (mean=3.29) and being open to experimenting with new approaches (mean=3.07). This indicates that employees primarily perceive their performance through the lens of quality, productivity, and adherence to established procedures, with less emphasis on proactive innovation.

The inferential analysis confirmed the significant influence of the independent variables on Employee Performance. The correlation analysis showed significant positive correlations between Skill Variety ($r=0.501$, $p<0.01$), Task Identity ($r=0.558$, $p<0.01$), Task Significance ($r=0.485$, $p<0.01$) and Employee Performance. The multiple regression analysis revealed that the combined independent variables significantly predict Employee Performance ($R^2=0.403$, Adjusted $R^2=0.390$, $F(3,136)=28.835$, $p<0.001$). This indicates that approximately 40.3% of the variance in employee performance can be explained by the three job characteristics studied. Furthermore, the analysis of regression coefficients showed that each independent variable had a significant positive influence on Employee Performance when controlling for the others: Skill Variety ($B=0.189$, $p=0.009$), Task Identity ($B=0.251$, $p=0.000$), and Task Significance ($B=0.154$, $p=0.025$). Task Identity emerged as the strongest individual predictor among the three. These findings strongly support the theoretical framework and indicate that enhancing these job characteristics is likely to lead to improved employee performance in the steel manufacturing sector.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, several key conclusions can be drawn regarding the influence of job characteristics on employee performance in steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County, Kenya.

Firstly, the study concludes that Skill Variety has a significant positive influence on employee performance. While employees generally perceive a diverse range of tasks and opportunities to use their existing skills, there is a recognized gap in the full utilization of their expertise and opportunities for continuous learning and development, particularly through formal programs. This suggests that enhancing the complexity and scope of tasks to fully leverage employee capabilities and providing structured learning opportunities are crucial for boosting performance. When employees feel challenged and see opportunities to grow their skills, they are more likely to be engaged and perform at a higher level.

Secondly, the study concludes that Task Identity significantly influences employee performance. Employees have a strong sense of clarity regarding their roles and responsibilities and take pride and initiative in completing tasks. However, the perceived lack of empowerment in decision-making related to their tasks is a notable limitation. This indicates that while employees connect with the outcome of their work, they may feel constrained by a lack of autonomy in how they achieve those outcomes. To maximize the positive impact of task identity on performance, empowering employees with a greater degree of decision-making authority over their tasks is essential. This fosters a greater sense of ownership and responsibility, driving improved performance.

Thirdly, the study concludes that Task Significance has a significant positive influence on employee performance. Employees clearly perceive the importance of their work in contributing to organizational goals and aligning with internal values and ethics. This internal relevance is a significant motivator. However, the lower perception of the broader societal impact of their work and the fulfillment derived from its social purpose indicate a potential area for improvement. Connecting employees more explicitly to the

end use and societal benefits of the steel products they produce can enhance their sense of purpose and meaning, which is a powerful driver of performance.

Overall, the study concludes that Skill Variety, Task Identity, and Task Significance are important predictors of employee performance in the steel manufacturing sector in Ruiru Sub County. While strengths exist in certain areas like task clarity and internal contribution, there are opportunities to enhance skill development, decision-making autonomy, and the perception of societal impact to further improve employee performance. The findings underscore the importance of well-designed jobs that are not only efficient but also intrinsically motivating by providing variety, a sense of completion, and a connection to meaningful outcomes.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. **Enhance Skill Variety through Job Enrichment and Development Programs:** Steel manufacturing companies in Ruiru Sub County should actively pursue strategies to enrich jobs by increasing the variety and complexity of tasks where feasible, ensuring that employees' full range of expertise is utilized. Furthermore, investing in and promoting continuous learning and development opportunities, including formal training programs, is crucial to facilitate skill expansion and employee growth.
- ii. **Increase Employee Autonomy and Decision-Making Authority:** To strengthen task identity and its positive influence on performance, companies should empower employees with greater autonomy in making decisions related to their tasks. This could involve providing more flexibility in work methods, involving employees in

process improvement decisions, and granting more discretion within defined operational parameters, particularly for experienced workers.

- iii. **Communicate and Connect Employees to the Broader Impact of their Work:** Organizations should make a deliberate effort to highlight the societal significance of the steel manufacturing industry and the specific contributions of employees' roles to addressing societal needs and supporting economic development. Regularly communicating how their products are used in vital infrastructure and other essential sectors can enhance employees' sense of purpose and fulfillment, thereby boosting task significance and performance.

5.5 Further Research

Based on the limitations of this study and the insights gained, the following areas for further research are suggested:

- i. **Longitudinal Study on the Impact of Job Redesign Interventions:** This study employed a cross-sectional design. Future research could utilize a longitudinal approach to examine the long-term effects of specific job redesign interventions aimed at enhancing skill variety, task identity, and task significance on employee performance metrics over time.
- ii. **Moderating and Mediating Roles of Individual and Organizational Factors:** This study focused on the direct influence of job characteristics. Future research could explore the potential moderating effects of individual differences (e.g., growth need strength, personality traits) and organizational factors (e.g., leadership style, organizational culture) on the relationship between job characteristics and employee performance. Additionally, investigating the mediating roles of psychological states (e.g., experienced meaningfulness, responsibility, knowledge of results) as proposed by Job Characteristics Theory would provide deeper theoretical insights.

iii. Comparative Study Across Different Manufacturing Sub-Sectors or Regions: This study focused specifically on steel manufacturing in Ruiru Sub County. Comparative studies examining the influence of job characteristics on employee performance in different manufacturing sub-sectors (e.g., textiles, food processing) or in different geographical regions within Kenya or East Africa could help to understand the generalizability of these findings and identify context-specific factors that may play a role.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Research Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire is to gather data on employee performance in steel manufacturing firms in Ruiru Sub County is influenced by job characteristics. Discretion shall be upheld while collecting the data. Only educational goals will be served by the information gathered.

Please check the appropriate box next to your response to each of the following questions. Please be as specific as you can in your responses.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Indicate your gender.

- a) Male
- b) Female

2. Kindly specify your age bracket.

- a) Below 25 years
- b) 26-35 years
- c) 36-45 years
- d) 46-55 years
- e) Above 45 years

3. Please indicate the level of your education.

- a) Post graduate
- b) Undergraduate
- c) Diploma certificate
- d) Certificate
- e) Secondary

4. State the number of years you have worked in the company?

- a) Less than one year
- b) 1-5 years
- c) 6-10 years
- d) 11-15 years
- e) Over 15 years

Job Characteristics and Employee Performance

For each of the following questions, please tick the box that corresponds to your answer. When responding, please be as descriptive as you can. Use a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being strongly agreed, 4 agree, 3 not sure, 2 disagree, and 1 strongly disagree.

SECTION B: Skills Variety and Employee Performance

In this section please tick (√) the most appropriate response for each of the statement in the table below for skills variety.

| Statement | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| My job involves performing a diverse range of tasks. | | | | | |
| Throughout my workday, I am able to engage in a variety of activities. | | | | | |
| There is a variety of tasks assigned to me regularly. | | | | | |
| In my position, I can put my abilities to use in a variety of ways. | | | | | |
| My work provides me with enough opportunity to put my talents to good use. | | | | | |
| I feel that my expertise is utilized to its fullest extent in my current position. | | | | | |
| Working here has given me many chances to learn new things. | | | | | |
| My role provides me with continuous learning and development opportunities. | | | | | |
| I feel encouraged to expand my skills and knowledge through training and professional growth programs. | | | | | |

SECTION C: Task Identity and Employee Performance.

Please choose the most suitable answer for each statement in the table about task identification and employee performance in this section.

| Statement | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My role in the company is well-defined and clearly communicated. | | | | | |
| I understand my specific responsibilities and duties within the organization. | | | | | |
| I know what is expected of me in my position and how it fits into the broader objectives. | | | | | |
| Whatever it is that you've entrusted to me, I take great pride in finishing it. | | | | | |
| I take initiative to ensure tasks are completed efficiently and effectively. | | | | | |
| I am empowered to make decisions regarding the tasks I am responsible for. | | | | | |

SECTION D: Task Significance and Employee Performance.

Please indicate the best answer for each statement in the table below by marking (←) the corresponding box in this section.

| Statement | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| My tasks directly contribute to achieving the organization's goals. | | | | | |
| I understand how my work impacts the company's strategic objectives. | | | | | |
| The tasks assigned to me align with the organization's goals. | | | | | |
| I believe my work positively impacts society. | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| My tasks contribute to addressing societal needs. | | | | | |
| I find fulfillment in the social purpose of my work. | | | | | |
| My tasks align with the organization's core values. | | | | | |
| I perceive my work consistent with the company's ethical standards. | | | | | |
| The tasks I undertake reflect the organization's commitment to values. | | | | | |

SECTION E: Employee Performance

In this section please tick (√) the most appropriate response for each of the statements regarding employee performance in the table below.

| Statement | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| I consistently strive to maintain a high standard of quality in my work. | | | | | |
| I take pride in delivering work that meets or exceeds expectations in terms of quality. | | | | | |
| I prioritize accuracy and attention to detail in all tasks I undertake. | | | | | |
| I consistently meet or surpass established productivity goals and targets. | | | | | |
| I am adept at managing my workload efficiently to ensure timely completion of tasks. | | | | | |
| I consistently deliver work within specified deadlines or timelines. | | | | | |
| I actively seek out innovative solutions to challenges encountered in my work. | | | | | |
| I am open to experimenting with new approaches to problem-solving to achieve optimal outcomes. | | | | | |
| I readily adapt to changes in work requirements, schedules, or procedures as needed. | | | | | |
| I demonstrate flexibility in adjusting to evolving work priorities and demands. | | | | | |