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GOVERNMENT OF KAKAMEGA**

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**INFLUENCE OF REWARD PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN THE HEALTH SECTOR IN THE COUNTY
GOVERNMENT OF KAKAMEGA**

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ABSTRACT

The Healthcare sector has suffered massive strikes and demonstration by the professionals and trade unions representing workers. This study sought to establish the influence of reward practices on employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega with a view of proposing a mechanism to manage employee retention. The study was anchored on Equity Theory. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The target population was 1,153 health workers in Kakamega County drawn from 11 health facilities and a sample size of 297 respondents was used. The Data was collected by the questionnaires which was the main instrument to collect primary data. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive inferential statistics (correlations and regression analyses). The results between reward practices and employee retention illustrated a positive and significant relationship between the two. It was concluded that reward practices accounted for 51.5 percent of employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega. The study findings may help to streamline the retention of staff in the health sector in Kakamega County by providing strategies of employee retention. The County health sector HRM department would gain from the findings of the study which would further enhance their skills in handling challenges of employee retention and understand factors which may have led to lack of employee retention.

Keywords: Reward Practices, Employee Retention, County Government of Kakamega

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INTRODUCTION

Reward practices do not entail monetary rewards only, these includes other rewards like cognition, commendation, the praise that employees are able to get from their managers, the opportunity to take on important projects or tasks and also leadership attention, (Oyira, Ella, Nkamare, Lukpata, Uwa & Awok2015). It is revealed that the theory of reward practices perceive that if human resource management is about putting resources into human capital from which a sensible return is required, then it is appropriate to reward individuals in an expected way, as indicated by their commitment (Aktar, Sachu & Ali, 2012). Besides, the reasoning of reward practices likewise perceives that it must be key as it addresses long-term issues identifying with how individuals ought to be esteemed for what they do and what they accomplish (Osemeke & Monday, 2014). In their research work, (Oyira et al., 2015) found out that every reward system is based on the assumption that rewarding employees would attract, retain and motivate workers in every institution either open or private.

Kenya is among the countries identified by WHO as having a critical deficiency of healthcare workers (WHO, 2013). While WHO has set a minimum threshold of 23 midwives, nurses and doctors per population of 10 000 as a necessity for delivery of essential maternal health and child services, Kenya's most recent ratio stands at 13 per 10 000 (WHO, 2013). In Kenya the emigration of highly trained medical professionals is threatening the very continuation of health services in all counties in Kenya. Kenya loses on average 20 highly qualified professionals each month through either brain drain or brain waste (Mullei, Mudhune, Wafula, Masamo, English, Goodman, Lagarde, & Blaauw, 2010). The brain drain of doctors currently stands at 51percent with main destination being the UK; while the brain drain rate of nurses is 8percent. Since this research is based on employees' retention in the health sector in

the County Government of Kakamega, there are no official publications made on the same, however a handful number of studies have been conducted in other counties and health institutions (Nyagudi & Juma, 2018; Magokha, 2015; Ministry of Health, 2013; WHO, 2013; Machayo, 2013). This will allow future researchers to determine the importance of focusing on certain areas where very limited documentation has been done.

Since 1998, United Kingdom and United States of America have significantly relied on African countries like Kenya, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Ghana, Zambia and Nigeria among others for the much needed qualified nurses as found out by Nyagudi and Juma (2018). Forty three percent of nurses registering in the UK in 2003, were foreign trained, compared to ten percent a decade earlier (Buchan, 2004). This has worsened the already pathetic national and district health systems, making it extremely hard for countries in Africa to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on health care provision (UNDP, 2014; UN, 2000).

In his study Samuel (2009), established that it is not only the private sector, governments are also facing difficulty in retaining skilled employees. The governments have admitted that retaining key employees is the most difficult aspect in public sector as a result most of the time when these employees move, they migrate to competing organizations with the knowledge and trade secrets acquired from their former employers, thus, creating a critical situation in the organization (Kottolli, 2010).

It is in this regard that the researcher analyzed the human resource management practices influencing employee retention at the County Government of Kakamega. This would allow future researches to determine the importance of focusing on certain areas where very limited documentation has been done. The research presented baseline information for the healthcare sector in the County Government

of Kakamega to illustrate the influence of reward practices on employee retention.

Statement of the Problem

Kakamega County health sector over the last few years has been bedevilled with continuous staff challenges ranging from staff unrest, due to this high turnover, the few remaining staff are demotivated and as a result, poor service delivery. The marked degree of both internal and external migration has intensively affected service delivery and it's attributed to various factors, with the key being remuneration and career prospects (KIPPRA, 2013; WHO, 2013). It has been established that medical doctors, clinical officers, enrolled nurses and laboratory technologists exit the service due to unfavourable working conditions resulting to uneven work distribution among the remaining medics (NCK, 2011). There were many health professionals in the key cadre leaving public service in the recent past (Health Sector HR Strategy, 2014-2018).

A number of studies have been carried investigating the influence of rewards practices on employee retention in different organizations. However, a few studies have focused in the health sector, specifically in counties. In a study done by (Gachunga, 2010) undertook a research on influence of human resources management practices on retention of core employees in the media sector in Kenya, a case of Standard Group Ltd. The study showed that Standard Group values leadership qualities that are aligned with the retention strategies and recruitment process. In her study (Wangui, 2009) looked at employee retention in local Kenyan banks with a focus on Equity bank. Her study established that Equity Bank used both financial and non-financial incentives to encourage its employees to stay. Romano *et al.*, (2014) undertook a study on Effects of Employee Engagement on Employee Retention in Micro-Finance Institutions. The results indicated a declining trend of employee engagement that perhaps explains the current increasing rates of staff

turnover. Although the medical officers earn the highest salary, this remains very low compared with international salaries, showing the poor competitiveness of Kenya on the international health labour market (WHO, 2013). Therefore, there were significant gaps between reward practices and employee retention scholarship in the health sector in Kenya, which the current study sought to address.

Research Objectives

The objective of this study was to establish the influence of reward practices on employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant influence between reward practices and employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

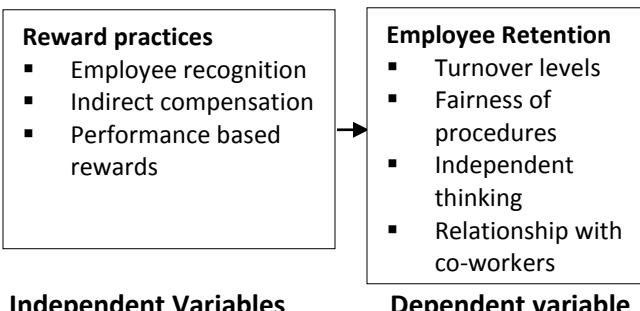
Equity Theory

Adams (1963) Equity theory, recognizes that individuals are concerned not only with the absolute amount of rewards they receive for their efforts, but also with the relationship of this amount to what others receive (Mumbua, 2017). Based on one's input, such as effort, experience, education, and competence, one can compare outcomes such as salary levels, increments, recognition and other factors. When people perceive an imbalance in their reward ratio relative to their colleagues, tension is created (Nazir *et al.*, 2013). This tension provides the basis for motivation, as people strive for what they perceive as equity and fairness. First, the theory holds that people develop beliefs about what constitutes a fair and equitable return for their contributions to their jobs. Second, the theory assumes that people tend to compare what they perceive to be the exchange they have with their employers. This concept of equity is most often interpreted in work

organizations as a positive association between an employee's effort or performance on the job and the reward or treatment she or he receives, (Adzei & Atinga, 2012).

This theory is applicable to the study since the theory holds that people develop beliefs about what constitutes a fair and equitable return for their contributions to their jobs. Second, the theory assumes that people tend to compare what they perceive to be the exchange they have with their employers (Nazir *et al.*, 2013). If ratios are equal, a state of equity is said to exist; they feel their situation is fair and that justice prevails and hence employees will be satisfied to continue working with their current employer. Inequity exists if the ratio is unequal and employees tend to view themselves as under rewarded and will therefore attempt to correct the inequity through exiting the organization to look for better prospects, (Bidisha, 2013).

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author (2019)

Review of Variables

Reward Practices

In her study, Sitati (2017) on effects of reward management practices on employee retention in the Hotel Industry in Kenya used descriptive survey research design. The target population of this study comprised of 213 hotels registered under Kenya Association of Hotelkeepers and Caterers in Kenya. A sample size of 137 hotels was picked from each region using stratified random sampling. A pilot test

was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments. Collection of data was done by use of a questionnaire and analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics. The study found out that there was a positive and significant relationship between capacity building and retention of employees in the hotel industry. Further, the study ascertained that reward influences employee retention in the hotel industry in Kenya both significantly and positively. The study recommended that human resource managers in the hotel industry should develop capacity building programs indicating various types of career development areas in the organizations and determine eligibility.

In their study, Lyria, Namusonge and Karanja (2014) on human resource management practices influencing staff retention in Non-Governmental Organizations in Kenya: a case study of Kenya Red Cross Society Eastern and Central Kenya regions to assess how the human resource factors that affect employee retention in the organization long-term. A descriptive research design was used with a total population of 45 employees in Eastern and Central regions of Kenya. A census was done instead of taking a sample to enhance accuracy. The response rate was at 88.9percent. Quantitative and qualitative technique was used to analyze open ended questions on the questionnaire and provide more-in-depth details. Data collected was analysed using SPSS statistical software, version 22. The study established that Human Resource practises indeed influence employee retention in an organization and their need to feel adequate to perform their jobs, sufficiently compensated for their performance and the need to see a potential for career and personal growth while working for the organization.

Several studies have addressed the impact of employee reward practices on turnover and retention (Chung, 2013; Brown *et al.*, 2010; Misau & Gerei, 2010; Walsh & Taylor, 2007). Employee compensation includes all forms of pay and rewards

received by employees for the performance of their jobs (Sayeed & Yaseen, 2013). Direct compensation includes employee wages and salaries, incentive-payments, bonuses and commissions. According to Wambui (2000), direct compensation serves as the most critical issue when it comes to attracting and retaining talents. According to Jayarathna (2014) rewards and recognitions are essential factors in enhancing employee job satisfaction and work motivation which is directly associated to organizational achievement. Khadka conducted a study in which he examined the relationship between rewards and employee retention in commercial banks of Pakistan. The study focused on four types of rewards of which one was recognition which he tested through Pearson correlation. The results showed that recognition correlates significantly (0.65) with employee retention (Khadka, 2012).

In a study conducted by Chew and Chan (2008) remuneration or compensation positively predicted organisational commitment and intention to stay. Organisations must see rewards as essential and increase their commitment to use it as an effective tool in retaining talents. The results of this study can be generalized in Australia and Europe because it involved nine large organisations from both private and public sectors and had about 475 respondents. However, the results could be different in Africa. Hong, Hao, Kumar, Ramendran and Kadiresan (2012) equally found that, compensation is significant to employee retention. These results were based on 278 respondents in Malaysia's education sector. These results could hold true for other similar organisations but probably not the banks because the business of the two institutions is by no means identical. Compensation offers employees some level of security, autonomy, recognition and improved self-worth, which consequently increases their sense of self-worth, leading to affective commitment (WHO, 2013) and retention.

Employee Retention

The study by Cherono (2017) on effects of human resource practices on employee retention in the real estate firms in Nairobi County was carried out in 5 out of 80 real estate firms in Nairobi. A sample size of 270 respondents from various real estate organizations was selected. The study used structured questionnaires to collect primary data. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviation, percentages and frequencies were used to analyse the data. Regression analysis was conducted to test the effect of HRM practices on employee retention. The findings of this study revealed that HRM practices such as compensation, training and development, performance management, supervisor support and work environment are vital to employee and indeed have significant influence on employee retention in real estate firms. The study results found that to an extent working environment affect employee retention at any level of management from top to lower management. An open comfortable, safe work environment and structure facilitates teamwork where employees are friendly. The study results did indicate a strongly positive relationship between HRM practices and employee retention.

Employee retention has become a daunting and highly challenging task for managers and human resource practitioners (Chiboiwa, Samuel, & Chipunza, 2010). It is challenging because employees have their own objectives and diverse needs to achieve which sometimes might be at variance with that of organisation. Such objectives and needs have to be accommodated for employees to continue in the organisation wholeheartedly and most often, through rewards, (Chiboiwa *et al.*, 2010).

Empirical Review

Numerous studies have been conducted throughout the world on employee retention strategies. Most of these studies aimed at finding retention strategies that would suit specific generational subsets,

organization. For example the study by Sitati (2017) to examine the effect of reward management practices on employee retention in the hotel industry in Kenya, established that job promotion had significant and positive influence on employee retention in the hotel industry in Kenya. Further, the study found out that remuneration practices influences employee retention in the hotel industry in Kenya both positively and significantly. The study showed that there was a significant and positive relationship between employee recognition practices and employee retention in the hotel industry.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey design. The design would enable the researcher systematically to collect data, present; analyse it before making conclusion and recommendation. The target population consisted of the following staff as illustrated in Table 1. Kakamega County Referral hospital did not have sufficient population to determine the influence of HRM practice and retention. This study adopted the level four hospitals in the County Government of Kakamega so as to arrive at the representative sample size and have a sufficient population to facilitate valid results.

Table 1: Target Population

S/No.	List of Level 4 Hospitals	Number of Staff
1	County Referral Hospitals	588
2	Butere Sub-county Hospital	105
3	Malava Sub-county Hospital	103
4	Lumakanda Sub-county Hospital	78
5	Matungu Sub-county Hospital	76
6	Likuyani Sub-county Hospital	59
7	Navakholo Sub-county Hospital	38
8	Iguhu Sub-county Hospital	39
9	Matunda Sub-county Hospital	28
10	Shibwe Sub-county Hospital	23
11	Mautuma Sub-county Hospital	16
TOTAL		1,153

Source: Human Resource Department, Health Sector Monthly Staff Returns, Kakamega County (September 2018)

The study gathered primary information by use of questionnaires which consisted of two parts and six sections. Section I had the demographic information of respondents such age, gender, education level and length of service. On the other hand, Section II captured information on human resource practices and employee retention. In this study, structured questionnaires were adopted to gather views from the respondents. The questionnaires were self-administered to the respondents by the Researcher.

RESULTS

Descriptive and Inferential Statistics Reward Practices and Employee Retention

Ten (10) different questions relating to the reward practices were asked. The respondents were asked to score on a five point Likert scale where; Strongly agreed, SA (5), Agree, A (4), Undecided, U (3), Disagree, D (2), Strongly disagree, SD (1). The items mean and standard deviation measuring level of agreement were computed from the respondent's response.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Reward Practices

Questions	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employees are paid based on job performance	280	1.00	5.00	4.1714	1.05030
Employees are given incentives after posting impressive results	280	1.00	5.00	3.1821	0.89944
Company gives a general salary increase	280	1.00	5.00	3.3964	0.89802
Company gives a cost of living increase	280	1.00	5.00	4.3071	1.08027
Company has a bonus/incentive plan	280	1.00	5.00	3.9071	1.26376
Company has a formal employee merit review process	280	1.00	5.00	3.3393	1.57349
There is an average merit increase yearly	280	1.00	5.00	2.4357	1.31280
Employees' salaries are reviewed yearly	280	1.00	5.00	2.4571	1.31368
There are various types of bonuses e.g. annual/year-end bonus and incentive bonus	280	1.00	5.00	3.8893	1.16639
Employees are fairly remunerated	279	1.00	5.00	2.4875	1.46630
Valid N (list wise)	279				

Source: Field data, 2019

The results were as discussed in Table 2. The questions were scored on a five point Likert scale. The question on whether the employees were paid based on job performance, had a mean of 4.1714 and a standard deviation of 1.05030; the question on the company gave a cost of living increase had a mean of 4.3071 with standard deviation of 1.08027; on whether the company had a bonus/incentive plan had a mean of 3.9071 with standard deviation of 1.26376; There were various types of bonuses for example annual/year-end bonus and incentive bonus had the mean of 3.8893 with standard deviation of 1.16639; company gave a general salary increase had the mean of 3.3964 with standard deviation of 0.89802; company had a formal employee merit review process had the mean of 3.3393 with standard deviation of 1.57349; employees were fairly remunerated had the mean of 2.4875 with standard deviation of 1.46630; employees' salaries are reviewed yearly had a mean of 2.4571 with standard deviation of 1.31368; there was an average merit increase yearly had the mean of 2.4357 with standard deviation of 1.31280. Out of the ten questions asked,

three variables had low scores and these were employees who were fairly remunerated, there was an average merit increase yearly and employees' salaries were reviewed yearly. This was an indication that these variables well practiced and they may affect employee retention.

The means of reward practices were regressed with the means of employee retention and the results were as shown in Table 3 below. In this regression analysis beta (β), is equivalent to the Karl Pearson correlation coefficient (r) (Sekaram, 2003) was used to measure the strength of the relationship.

Furthermore, regression analysis, correlation analysis, ANOVA and t-tests results were used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 percent significance level, with 95 percent confidence, which is acceptable in social sciences. First the study set out the following null hypothesis:

H_0 : There is no significant influence between reward practices and employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega.

Table 3: Regression Results of Reward Practices and Employee Retention

Model Summary								
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
0.718	0.515	0.497	0.72509	0.515	28.056	10	264	0.000
ANOVA								
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F			Sig.
Regression		147.507	10	14.751	28.056			0.000
Residual		138.799	264	0.526				
Total		286.305	274					

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant): Reward Practices

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	1.948	0.285	6.839	0.000
	Reward	0.556	0.089		

a. Dependent Variable: Reward Practices
b. Independent Variable: Reward Practices
c. Significance level <0.05

Source: Field data, 2019

The test criterion was set such the study rejected the null hypothesis $H_0: \beta_1 = 0$. The results were: regression coefficient ($B=0.556$), correlation coefficient ($\beta=0.576$), ANOVA ($F=28.056$) while t-test value ($t=6.237$). All these values were positive and significant since p-value was less than 0.05. In the test criterion, the null hypothesis was accepted if the p-value was more than 0.05, an indication that the relationship between the two variables was not significant.

The results illustrated that the relationship between reward practices and employee retention was positive and significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study revealed that reward practices accounted for 51.5 percent ($r^2=0.515$) of employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega while the

rest of the percentage was accounted for by other factors.

The results were represented in the model

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where Y = Employee Retention,

$$\beta_0 = 1.948$$

$$\beta_1 = 0.556$$

$$X_1 = \text{Reward practices}$$

$$\epsilon = 0.089$$

Replacing in the equation above, gives the following model:

$Y = 1.948 + 0.556X_1 + 0.089$. The results therefore clearly indicated that there exist a statistically significant positive relationship between reward practices and employee retention.

The study was in agreement with past studies which revealed that remuneration or compensation positively predicted organisational commitment and

intention to stay and that Organisations must see rewards as essential and increase their commitment to use it as an effective tool in retaining talents (Chew & Chan, 2008). Compensation offers employees some level of security, autonomy, recognition and improved self-worth, which consequently increases their sense of self-worth, leading to affective commitment (WHO, 2013) and retention. Kadiresan (2012) equally found that, compensation is significant to employee retention. These results were based on 278 respondents in Malaysia's education sector.

Furthermore, Khadka (2012) conducted a study in which he examined the relationship between rewards and employee retention in commercial banks of Pakistan. The study focused on four types of rewards of which one was recognition which he tested through Pearson correlation. The results showed that recognition correlates significantly (0.65) with employee retention.

Descriptive of Employee Retention

This gave results for the dependent variable (employee retention). The results were as shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of Employee Retention

Questions	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Workers participate in management activities	279	1.00	5.00	4.1792	1.06115
Employees are given a chance to have independent thinking and make workable decisions	279	1.00	5.00	4.3405	1.14843
I can see myself working here again and again	279	1.00	5.00	4.0179	1.22461
There is better co-ordination among co-workers	275	1.00	5.00	4.4436	0.81473
I feel like I am able to reach my full potential at the organization	276	1.00	5.00	4.2754	0.87609
I feel comfortable working with my teammates	276	1.00	5.00	4.2101	0.88587
I feel like I always get feedback.	276	1.00	5.00	4.2065	0.99312
I have a clear understanding about my career path and promotion plan.	276	1.00	5.00	4.2319	0.80715
I would apply for this job again in this organization.	276	1.00	5.00	4.2754	1.03936
I feel like my work is valued in this organization	276	1.00	5.00	4.4058	0.78752
Valid N (list wise)	275				

Source: Field data, 2019

The questions were scored on a five point Likert scale. It should be noted that all the variables had a mean scores of above 4.0. The variables with least varied views were: I have a clear understanding about my career path and promotion plan (mean =4.2319; standard deviation = 0.80715); there is better co-ordination among co-workers (mean =4.4436; standard deviation = 0.81473); I feel like I am able to reach my full potential at the organization (mean

=4.2754; standard deviation = 0.87609); I feel comfortable working with my teammates (mean =4.2101; standard deviation = 0.88587) and I feel like I always get feedback (mean =4.2065; standard deviation = 0.99312).

CONCLUSIONS

The results between reward practices and employee illustrated that there was a significant positive relationship between reward practices and employee

retention. Reward practices accounted for 51.5 percent ($r^2=0.515$) of employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega.

Suggestions for Further Research

Similar research was encouraged to be conducted in the other counties in Kenya to ascertain if consistent results could be achieved.

Further research on the influence of reward practices on employee retention can be done in other organizations other than the health sector to ascertain if consistent results could be achieved.

Research was encouraged to establish the moderating influence of organizational factors on the relationship between reward practices and employee retention in the health sector in other counties in Kenya.

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