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

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

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study sought to establish the influence of safety 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 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs 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 showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between safety practices and employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega. It was concluded that safety practices accounted for 58.6 percent of employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega. The study recommended that organizations should proactively invest in occupation, health and safety programs in various departments. 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 study would provide a basis for future scholars, researchers and other stakeholders to use the results as a reference while also enabling researchers to carry out more investigation on other strategies that would increase 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.*

**Key Words:** Health and Safety, Employee Retention, County Government of Kakamega

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## INTRODUCTION

Health and safety enhances the physical, mental and social well-being of workers, and supports the development and maintenance of employees working capacity, (WHO, 2013). One of the common merging beliefs is that “employees are capital” and are considered most valuable assets. In many countries human resource management needs special attention and care, (Jacqueline, 2014). Therefore, essence of retaining competent workers is to provide appropriate level of jobs and job environment (Sutherland, 2004). Safety is the processes, or procedural strategies to protect and promote the health and safety of workers and thus eliminate all factors, behaviours and conditions hazardous to human health and safety at work, (Jemutai, Kibeti & Musebe 2017).

Developed nations have become increasingly reliant on international expatriates to fill health workforce positions across the skill spectrum, from home health aides and assistants to nurses, physicians, and medical specialists, (Nyagudi & Juma 2018). Amid rising life expectancy and expanding elderly populations, this reliance is expected to intensify in future decades and in several health occupations, (WHO, 2013). Migration, together with other factors in many countries such as insufficient health systems, low wages, and poor working conditions, are key factors determining low health worker density in countries with the lowest health indicators, (Kinyili, 2015). WHO estimates that the basic health-care system of 57 countries is affected by shortage of human resources and about one third of these countries are the emerging market economies (Hoffman, 2013; ILO, 2010).

Since this research is based on employees’ retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega, there were no official publications made on the same, however a handful number of studies had been conducted in other counties and health institutions (Nyagudi & Juma 2018; Magokha 2015;

Ministry of Health, 2013; WHO, 2013); Machayo, 2013). Nevertheless, employee retention in the health sector had been studied among some of the developing countries such as Nigeria, Australia, USA, UK, India, among others (Boxall, 2011); Raziq, 2015); Ministry of Health, 2013; Ndetei, 2007); WHO, 2013). Poor ratio of health workers in health facilities in Kenya had attributed to patients in public healthcare facilities forced to pay bribes to access health services, receive improved quality services, reduce waiting times and to obtain drugs and meals (KACC. 2016). This has been partly caused by ineffective human resource practices in the public health facilities.

It is in this regard that the researcher analyzed safety 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 safety 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 HRMPs 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 uses 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 safety 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 safety practices on employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The study was guided by the following research hypotheses:

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant influence between safety practices and employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory**

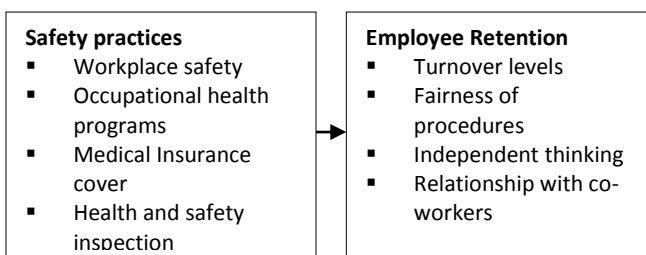
Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a developmental psychology theory proposed by Maslow (1943). This theory puts forward the idea that individuals move through a fundamental number of hierarchical motivations, in a unique order, based upon both physiological and psychological needs. In his theory Maslow (1943) believes that employees constantly desire next circumstances which they do not yet have. Once lower need has been satisfied, people try to achieve the next level. Therefore, lower need no longer acts as a motivation factor. The need of the next higher level in the hierarchy has become the motivation factor. People search ways to achieve the demand of next level, (Misau, 2010).

Maslow (1943) gave a theory called Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs where motivation helps an individual to satisfy his basic needs. Abraham Maslow depicts the needs as a pyramid with five levels. The lower level in the hierarchy is the Man's basic and more powerful need which influence on the person's behaviour. Starting from the lowest level, the five levels are the physiological needs which satisfy basic human needs such as air, food, water, sleep and shelter. If any of these needs are not satisfied the employee's focus on the job at hand goes down, (Armstrong, 2010). This theory will be applicable in this research since the safety needs of the employees will be observed by the organization by rewarding employees to work efficiently and stay longer with the organization.

The implications of this theory provide useful insights for managers and other organizational leaders (Mullei 2010). Managers need to find ways of motivating

employees by devising programs or practices aimed at satisfying emerging or unmet needs in order to retain them (Mumbua 2017). Managers have the responsibility to create a proper climate in which employees can develop to their fullest potential and make them feel part of the organization, (Nazir, Saifur-rehman & Khalid, 2013). Maslow's hierarchy of needs is applicable in this study because the fundamental employee's need is to get shelter and clothing followed by other hierarchy of needs. Failure to provide basic needs to any employee would theoretically increase employee frustration and could result in poor performance, lowering job satisfaction, and increasing withdrawal from the organization (Nazir *et al.*, 2013).

### Conceptual Framework



**Independent Variables**      **Dependent variable**

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

**Source: Author (2019)**

### Review of Variables

#### Safety Practices and Employee Retention

A favourable working environment is considered one of the most important factors in employees' retention. Working environment is generally discussed at industrial perspective, focus on aspect, that is, noise, toxic substances exposure and heavy lifts. In their study, Salman, Mahmood, Aftab, and Mahmood (2016) conducted a study about impact of safety health environment on employee retention in pharmaceutical industry: mediating role of job satisfaction and motivation. The purpose of this study was to analyse how employee retention is influenced

by factors like safety health environment, job satisfaction and motivation. The research was quantitative in nature, where 250 survey questionnaires were distributed among the employees of pharmaceutical industry in Pakistan. The study results confirmed that employee retention is a significant outcome of safety health environment. Moreover, the levels of job satisfaction and employee motivation equally mediated the relationship between safety health environment and employee retention. The findings suggested that the pharmaceutical firms in Pakistan should foster the health protection policies, and in turn it would help enhance the satisfaction and motivation in staff, resulting in the retention of capable employees.

In their research work, Akomeah, Ntow and Mensah (2015) conducted a study about Occupational Health and Safety Management and Turnover Intention in the Ghanaian Mining Sector. In this study, the mining industry was considered as one of the most dangerous and hazardous industries and the need for effective and efficient occupational health and safety management were critical to safeguard workers and the industry. The study used a cross-sectional survey design to collect quantitative data from the 255 mine workers that were conveniently sampled from the Ghanaian mining industry. The data collection tools were standardized questionnaires that measured occupational health and safety management and turnover intentions. The study also found that turnover intention of employees is heavily influenced by the commitment of safety leadership in ensuring the effective formulation of policies and supervision of occupational health and safety at the workplace. In conclusion, the present study demonstrated that safety leadership was crucial in the administration of safety practices to reduce turnover intention in organizations.

#### Employee Retention

The study by Cheron (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**

A study by Kinyili (2015) on the role of human resource management practices on retention of staff in public health institutions in Machakos county established that there were weak but statistically considerable positive relationships between career advancement practices, remuneration practices, work-life balance practices and employee retention. The career advancement practices, remuneration practices, work-life balance practices in place were found to be unsatisfactory. For example, salaries were often delayed and poor, critical allowances were not provided, their facilities were not properly equipped and a few available were in poor physical state and promotions were not done appropriately while flexi working programmes were not provided.

### **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
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,153</b>

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 of Safety Practices and Employee Retention

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Safety Practices**

Questions	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Arrangements have been put in place for periodic updating and use of the safety case and assessment to guide operations	280	1.00	5.00	3.3714	1.61464
County hospital management allocates appropriate resources (funds and time) to accomplish goals and manage the safety program.	280	1.00	5.00	3.9071	1.28903
Hospital management effectively communicates worker safety goals and expectations to all those working for or on behalf of the organization	280	1.00	5.00	4.0286	1.05710
Hospital has suitable and sufficient fire warning and evacuation systems	280	1.00	5.00	3.9857	0.91178
Hospital management involve workers in defining and developing the worker safety practices program structure	280	1.00	5.00	4.3321	0.99120
Hospital has competent persons trained to ensure the safe evacuation	280	1.00	5.00	3.5821	1.32269

of all persons from buildings in the event of serious and imminent danger					
Hospital working environment is conducive to work in	280	1.00	5.00	4.0143	1.06415
Hospital has minimum complains concerning working environment	280	1.00	5.00	4.1643	0.94744
Hospital has employers' liability insurance	280	1.00	5.00	4.1393	1.01170
Hospital has public liability insurance	280	1.00	5.00	4.1643	0.89291
Valid N (list wise)	280				

Source: Field data, 2019

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of safety practices on employee retention. Results were shown in Table 2. The questions were scored on a five point Likert scale. The question on whether the Hospital management involved workers in defining and developing the worker safety practices program structure, had a mean of 4.3321 and a standard deviation of 0.99120; the question on whether Hospital had minimum complains concerning working environment had a mean of 4.1643 with standard deviation of 0.94744; on whether the Hospital had public liability insurance had a mean of 4.1643 with standard deviation of 0.89291; Hospital had employers' liability insurance had the mean of 4.1393 with standard deviation of 1.01170; Hospital management effectively communicated worker safety goals and expectations to all those working for or on behalf of the organization had the mean of 4.0286 with standard deviation of 1.05710; Hospital had suitable and sufficient fire warning and evacuation systems had the mean of 3.9857 with standard deviation of 0.91178; County hospital management

allocated appropriate resources (funds and time) to accomplish goals and managed the safety program had a mean grade of 3.9071 with standard deviation of 1.28903; Hospital had competent persons trained to ensure the safe evacuation of all persons from buildings in the event of serious and imminent danger had a mean grade of 3.5821 with standard deviation of 1.32269; Arrangements had been put in place for periodic updating and use of the safety case and assessment to guide operations had a mean of 3.3714 with standard deviation of 1.61464.

Out of the ten questions asked, six variables had means of 4.0 and above while four variables had means of below 4.0. This was an indication that employees in the in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega were to some good extent exposed to safety practices and these may affected employees' retention in the health sector.

The means of safety practices were regressed with the means of employee retention and the results were as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Regression Results of Safety Practices and Employee Retention**

Model Summary									
R		Adjusted R		Std. Error of		Change Statistics			Sig. F
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	ANOVA	the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Change
0.765	0.586	0.570		0.80258	0.586	37.923	10	268	0.000
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F			Sig.	
Regression		244.281	10	24.428	37.923			0.000	



Residual	172.630	268	0.644
Total	416.910	278	

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant): Safety Practices

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	0.520	0.335	1.549	0.010
	Safety Practices	0.459	0.073	5.657	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Retention

b. Independent Variable: Safety Practices

c. Significance level <0.05

Source: Field data, 2019

In this regression analysis beta ( $\beta$ ), was 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 were used to test the third hypothesis tested at 0.05 percent significance level, with 95percent confidence, which is acceptable in the social sciences. First the study set out the following null hypothesis:

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant influence between safety practices and employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega.

The test criterion was set such the study rejected the null hypothesis H<sub>0</sub>1 if  $\beta_3 \neq 0$ . The results were: regression coefficient (B=0.459), correlation coefficient (beta=0.355), ANOVA (F=37.923) while t-test value (t=5.657). All these values were positive and significant since p-value was less than 0.05. The results signpost of not a very strong relationship between safety practices and employee retention (B=0.459 and beta=0.355).

In the test criterion, the null hypothesis was accepted when the p-value was more than 0.05, an indication that the relationship between the two variables was not significant. Results in this study illustrated that the relationship between safety practices and employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega was positive and significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected on this ground. The study revealed that safety practices accounted for 58.6 percent ( $r^2=0.586$ ) of employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega and the rest was explained by other factors.

The results were represented in the model:  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$

Where Y= Employee Retention,

$\beta_0 = 0.520$

$\beta_3 = 0.459$

$X_3 =$  safety practices

$\epsilon = 0.073$

Replacing in the equation above, gave the following model:  $Y = 0.520 + 0.459X_3 + 0.073$ . The results therefore clearly indicated that there exists a statistically significant positive relationship between safety and employee retention.

The study results were consistent with past studies. Aftab and Mahmood (2016) conducted a study about impact of safety health environment on employee retention in pharmaceutical industry: mediating role of job satisfaction and motivation. The study results confirmed that employee retention was a significant outcome of safety health environment. Moreover, the levels of job satisfaction and employee motivation equally mediated the relationship between safety health environment and employee retention. The findings suggested that the pharmaceutical firms in Pakistan should foster the health protection policies, and in turn it would help enhance the satisfaction and motivation in staff, resulting in the retention of capable employees.

In their research work, Akomeah et al (2015) conducted a study about occupational health and safety management and turnover intention in the Ghanaian Mining Sector. The study also found that turnover intention of employees is heavily influenced by the commitment of safety leadership in ensuring the effective formulation of policies and supervision of occupational health and safety at the workplace. Conclusion: The present study demonstrates that safety leadership is crucial in the administration of safety practices to reduce turnover intention in organizations.

#### 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**

Descriptive Statistics					
Questions	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 was 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

There was a positive and significant relationship between safety practices and employee retention. Safety practices account for 58.6percent ( $r^2=0.586$ ) of employee retention in the health sector in the County Government of Kakamega.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The County Government of Kakamega hospitals should proactively invest in occupation, health and

safety programs, come up with safety design and preventive approaches which mainly deal in what should be designed to employees so as not to cause harm to minimize employee turnover.

## Suggestions for Further Research

Similar research is encouraged to be conducted in the other counties in Kenya to ascertain if consistent results can be achieved. Further research on the influence of safety practices on employee retention can be done in other organizations other than the health sector to ascertain if consistent results could be achieved. Research is encouraged to establish the moderating influence of organizational factors on the relationship between safety practices and employee retention in the health sector in other counties in Kenya.

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