



**ENTREPRENEURIAL TALENT ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In the quest to remain afloat in the cut-throat competition for reasonable market share, enterprise owners are faced with a difficult task of formulating an internal combination of resources that will give them a competitive advantage. The purpose of this study was to determine how entrepreneurial talent engagement practices affected the performance of small and medium-sized businesses in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The researcher's particular goals in this study were to determine how talent development, employee recruitment, talent management, and compensation affect the performance of small and medium-sized firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The researcher developed meaningful findings that will provide resourceful knowledge to various stakeholders in the entrepreneurial space such as small and medium size owners, business financiers, governmental and non-governmental players in trade, and skilled labour providers will gain insight into the best practices in employer-entrepreneurial talent engagement and relationship. The study adopted Inclusive and Exclusive theories of talent management, Prospective theory, Reinforcement theory and the balanced score card model to support the variables of the study. 353 SMEs were selected as a sample size from the 3000 SMEs in Nairobi City County, Kenya, that were registered and licensed, using the Yaro Yamane 1967 formula. In this study, the dependent and independent variables were explained in connection to one another using a correlational research methodology. Because this approach answers the research questions posed in this study, it was determined to be appropriate for this investigation. Questionnaires were employed as the data collecting tool, and a sample was chosen using the stratified random sampling technique. The researcher used the content analysis approach to process the qualitative data, while the Statistical Package for Social Science was used to analyze the quantitative data. Inferential and descriptive statistics were then used to determine the study's conclusions.*

**Key words:** Talent Development, Employee Recruitment, Talent Management, Employee Compensation

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## INTRODUCTION

The term entrepreneurial talent engagement practices is the act of assessing and developing an organization's employees so that their talents, skills and potential can be effectively utilized for the best outcome to the organization (Pandita & Ray, 2018). In most developed countries, there has been a strong focus on encouraging entrepreneurship for the past few decades (Martinez *et al.*, 2019). With globalization resulting in an increased number of entrepreneurial ventures, there is continual pressure from policymakers and industry leaders alike to foster entrepreneurial talent engagement practices as well as to provide support for SMEs. The external environment movers of sustained desirable performance have nearly been saturated as every enterprise have deployed them to gain a competitive edge (Martinez *et al.*, 2019). However, the heterogeneous nature of the internal business environment coupled with uniqueness of talent mix could be the key to the highly sought after competitive advantage in the market.

In the developing countries found in Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa, more focus is laid on nurturing the development of a productive workforce (Heffernan *et al.*, 2022). Developing countries are keen to support entrepreneurship as a means to drive growth for their country. It is evident that the move for promoting entrepreneurial activity and nurturing a productive workforce in most developing countries is perceived as a routine practice. Hence most SMEs managers and owners have not come to the full realization of the power that lies in entrepreneurial talent engagement practice geared towards nurturing the development of a productive workforce. In Nairobi City County, SMEs owners and managers respond to market place competition by trying to identify the possible opportunities and run after them sometimes without a well calibrated market leadership plan (Wambua & Koori, 2018). Hence they focus on the external environment movers, which have already been used by their competitors and may not necessarily give them a unique competitive edge in

the market either in Profitability, unique business process, learning and growth, or market Share. In this study, the researcher explored the issue of entrepreneurial talent engagement practices such as employee recruitment, talent development, and talent management and employee compensation with a focus to SMEs in Nairobi City County Kenya. In so doing, the researcher came up with meaningful findings that will provide resourceful knowledge to various stakeholders in the entrepreneurial space such as small and medium size owners, business financiers, governmental and non-governmental players in trade, and skilled labour providers. These will possibly gain insight on the best practices on developing a sustainable desired performance in their specific industries.

The indicators of organizational performance include; Profitability in business, Business processes, Learning and growth, and Market Share. Profitability is the measure of performance expressed as a percentage of surplus income over all costs. According to Oyewo, 2022, business profit is the difference between income and expenses or the financial value left after all production and overhead costs have been deducted.

Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement is the practice of assessing and developing an organization's employees so that their talents, skills and potential can be effectively utilized for the best outcome to the organization (Pandita & Ray, 2018). This is achieved by identifying, nurturing and rewarding key competencies of an individual with an aim to strengthen or up-skill their existing talents and skills for better performance. According to (Kaliannan *et al.*, 2023) Talent Engagement is the emotional and mental energy that an employee feel and is ready to dispense towards their workplace or employer. Some of the common Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement practices that are adopted in the market place include; talent development, employee recruitment, talent management and employee compensation (Gure & Karugu, 2018). Organizational managers use these four Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement practices to

structure and restructure a skills-set mix that would easily give the firm a competitive advantage in the market. Through proper engagement of the available skills, talents and untapped potential among new and existing employees there could be the secret to market leadership in profitability, market share, and business growth, learning and innovation. Each of the practices plays a key role in organizational success and commitment to meeting the performance objectives of the organization.

In Kenya, the categorization for Small and Medium Enterprises is divided into Micro-enterprises, small, and medium enterprises. Hence the term changes to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME). A micro-enterprise in Kenya is a start-up business with less than ten employees. In this study, the researcher will focus on Small and medium size enterprises within Nairobi City County Kenya because they are formally registered and recognized unlike many micro enterprises. As per the licencing records by the Nairobi city County licencing office (2015) there were 30252 formally registered SMEs in the County. According to Kasema, (2023) most of SMEs fail before their fifth birthday while other new start-ups are registered. According to Mutunga, (2020), there are 3000 registered, licensed and operational small and medium enterprises in Nairobi City County. In Kenya, Small and Medium enterprises comprise up to 50 and 100 employees, respectively (Gure & Karugu, 2018).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the current digital transformation era of trade and investment, nearly all the possible areas of gaining business competitive mileage have been occupied and almost exploited. Different business organizations are in an endless contest to gain a competitive edge in the market so as to outwit their competitors in the respective industry and market. As a result, most business entities have overly focussed on the external environment factors to the extent of neglecting possible internal environment factors and practices that could be a possible game changer in the market. External factors such as

legal-political, technological, cultural and economic have been focussed on for quite some time (Gupta *et al.*, 2018). On the contrary, Internal factors such as human capital, management styles, policies and practices, and values have for some time been neglected as potential areas which can be capitalised on for improved business performance. Focussing on the internal business environment could possibly break the monotonous saturation of common business practices and present a heterogeneous space of business competition (Martinez *et al.*, 2019). The success of the organization could be linked to the organization's practice in engaging its employees and getting them to focus their best skills and talents in the correct positions for success.

This research study sought to establish the best Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement practices and how they influences organizational performance. The intention was to explore such entrepreneurial talent engagement practices as talent development, employee recruitment, talent management, and employee compensation practices to show their influence on performance of Small and Medium Enterprises within the Nairobi City County Kenya. Organizational leaders will benefit from knowing how to utilize their resources for a fair competitive edge in the market as well as be informed on the right method of competing fairly in their respective market. Having a pool of resources is no longer a problem in the modern day, but how to entrepreneurially engage the skills and talents available for the best performance.

### **Research Objectives**

The general objective of this study was to establish the impact of Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement practices on the performance of selected small and medium enterprises in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were:

- To establish the effect of talent development on performance of small and medium enterprises in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

- To analyse effect of employee recruitment on performance of small and medium businesses in Nairobi City County, Kenya
- To establish effect of talent management on performance of small and medium businesses in Nairobi City County Kenya.
- To find out the effect of employee compensation on performance of small and medium businesses in Nairobi City County Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Balanced Score Card

A balanced scorecard is a business performance measurement tool that business managers use to determine the business's periodical achievements against the company's strategic goals (Faizova *et al.*, 2020). The metric instrument is used to examine the business's performance using four aspects of a business. These include; the business processes, the company's growth and learning, financial aspects, and customer growth trends. In addition to measuring business performance against set standards, the balanced scorecard tool coined in 1992 was designed to point out areas that need to be improved on so that the entity could assume the desired shape and outcome. The four measurement dimensions have triggered the drift from solely inclining on financial aspects as the only indicator of business performance (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021). The balanced scorecard model, therefore, utilizes monetary and non-monetary measures to determine business performance.

Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement practices should channel all the organization's resources toward building a good image per the balanced scorecard measurement tool. On the other hand, the balanced scorecard report is used by managers to examine the implementation of set out objectives and corporate goals (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021). Each action taken in the business as an Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement endeavour could impact the entity's performance positively or negatively. Given this reality, the researcher set out to determine how entrepreneurial talent

engagement techniques affected the performance of Nairobi City County's small and medium-sized businesses. Our guiding instrument for figuring out how small and medium-sized businesses performed as a research study variable was the balanced scorecard.

### Exclusive Approach Theory in Talent Management

Talent Management is the strategic and systematic process of employee recruitment, selection, training, development, performance evaluation, career planning and succession planning to optimize talent within an organization so that it more effectively meets organizational goals. The exclusive approach theory which was referred to as the elitist approach by Al, Cascio, & Paauwe, (2014) suggests that business owners and Entrepreneurs could optimize their business operations by attracting, selecting, growing and retaining high performance employees for sustainable market leadership. The postulates of the exclusive theory stated that people are born with different talents but this does not mean they have unlimited capabilities. People only have specific skills which can be developed to fulfil their defined talent profile but they can never exceed beyond their limitations as defined by the profile.

This theory has been critiqued by various academicians including Richard E. Boyatzis, a professor and author of emotional intelligence. Boyatzis argues that talent is not real but rather something that is created by the dynamic interaction between a person's surroundings and what they think in which case, even someone with high talent who happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time would fail. Boyatzis also argues that people can achieve success as long as they have access to resources such as capital, technology, education and information etc., but are not limited by their innate abilities alone.

### Inclusive Approach Theory in Talent Development

Whereas talent development is the process of identifying hidden talents among employees in the organization and equipping them with the right skills to utilize their untapped potential, the



inclusive theory also referred to as the egalitarian or strength based approach by Al, Cascio, & Paauwe, (2014) coincides with the practice in suggesting that everyone in the organization has different talents that can be put to use in many different ways for organizational success. People have a certain set of skills that may not be developed when working on a specific task but could still prove valuable when applied elsewhere for other purposes (Mousa & Ayoubi, 2019). These skills could be identified as hidden talents among employees and can be harnessed by entrepreneurs or business managers to create a unique source of competitive advantage.

### **Prospect theory**

Recruitment and selection of employees is an essential part of any business. Improving recruitment processes and establishing the right employment brand can help companies grow. The use of psychology in recruitment and selection processes has grown steadily as businesses become more aware that psychometric tests are vital to predicting employee performance (Sutrisno & Kumar, 2022).

The use of prospect theory, with its focus on losses and gains, can be used by employers as they analyse the perceived skills and talents of potential employees during employee selection (Dash, 2021). The Prospect theory implies that entrepreneurs will choose the potential employees with the highest prospective gains and lowest prospective losses. For instance, a candidate who has more skills and talents and less training and coaching need will be chosen as an employee. In addition, a perceived low talent and skill leads to higher employee training costs and lower probability of selection.

### **Reinforcement theory of employee Compensation**

Reinforcement Theory of Employee Compensation was introduced by Victor Vroom in 1964, who stated that the reason why employers pay employees is to reinforce suitable behaviours and reduce unsuitable behaviours. In other words, employees are paid for doing what their employer wants them to do. As a result of this behaviour,

workers will be motivated to work harder and strive to achieve higher levels of performance. This theory implies that motivation is based on the expectancy theory of motivation which states that people are motivated when they have the ability to perform and when they expect some positive outcome will come from their performance (Watters, 2021).

### **Empirical Review**

#### **Talent Development**

Talent Development is identifying hidden talents among employees and equipping them with the right skills to utilize their untapped potential. Every organization intending to attain sustainable competitive advantage must indulge in activities that develop talent among the available staff. Developing talent is the process whereby an organization systematically ensures that it has the right talent with the necessary knowledge, skills, motivation, and potential to fulfill its needs now and in the future. Often, employees join the organization with potential and unrefined skills and talent. It is the work of the Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement entity to identify such talents, skills, and potential so that they can develop plans to refine them (Mwangi, 2019).

#### **Employee Recruitment**

Employee Recruitment is the process by which an organization acquires the right human capital productively and manages their stay or departure from the organization's human capital list. The hiring process for an organization or company is done through a recruitment process. The recruitment process involves searching for qualified potential employees to fill existing positions and manage short-term and long-term staffing needs. Hiring someone is the act of recruiting someone to work with your organization. There are four main types of employee recruitment: Headhunting, Career Advertising, Agency Recruitment, and Inbound Marketing (Ooko, 2017). These four are collectively categorized as attracting and selecting strategies in the recruitment process. Apart from attracting and selecting, a more significant part of

employee recruitment is the aspect of human resource planning.

### Talent Management

In order to utilize talent inside an organization and more successfully accomplish organizational goals, talent management is the deliberate and methodical process of employee recruitment, selection, training, development, performance evaluation, career planning, and succession planning. Once employee recruitment, selection, training, and development are made, the other two primary functions of talent management are performance evaluation and career planning. In most organizations, performance evaluation is conducted through the use of written objectives and the use of performance appraisals (Ali *et al.*, 2019). Using written objectives to evaluate an employee's performance helps organizational managers to keep track of the performance of each employee while at the same time indicating possible areas to be improved. If there are areas to be improved, the management would, on another scale, determine the best course of action in terms of training, development, and coaching. Evaluation

based on written objectives involves management feedback covering the employee's performance and areas that can still be improved upon generally.

### Employee Compensation

Employee Compensation is the combination of the benefits package offered by an employer to employees in exchange for their services to the organization. Compensation impacts an employee's performance in many ways. Compensation can motivate employees to work harder and achieve better results. However, the type of compensation offered, either monetary or non-monetary, can affect motivation levels as well. Non-monetary compensation is increased through retirement plans, paid leave, flexible working plans, and medical insurance benefits. Salary increments or bonuses can increase monetary compensation; each method affects performance differently. Salary management is a yearly process in which employers review the salary structure to ensure that all positions are at an equivalent level. A bonus is usually dependent on some efficiency-related goal being reached (e.g., sales targets, profit margins, or total hours worked) (Waithira. 2018).

### Conceptual Framework

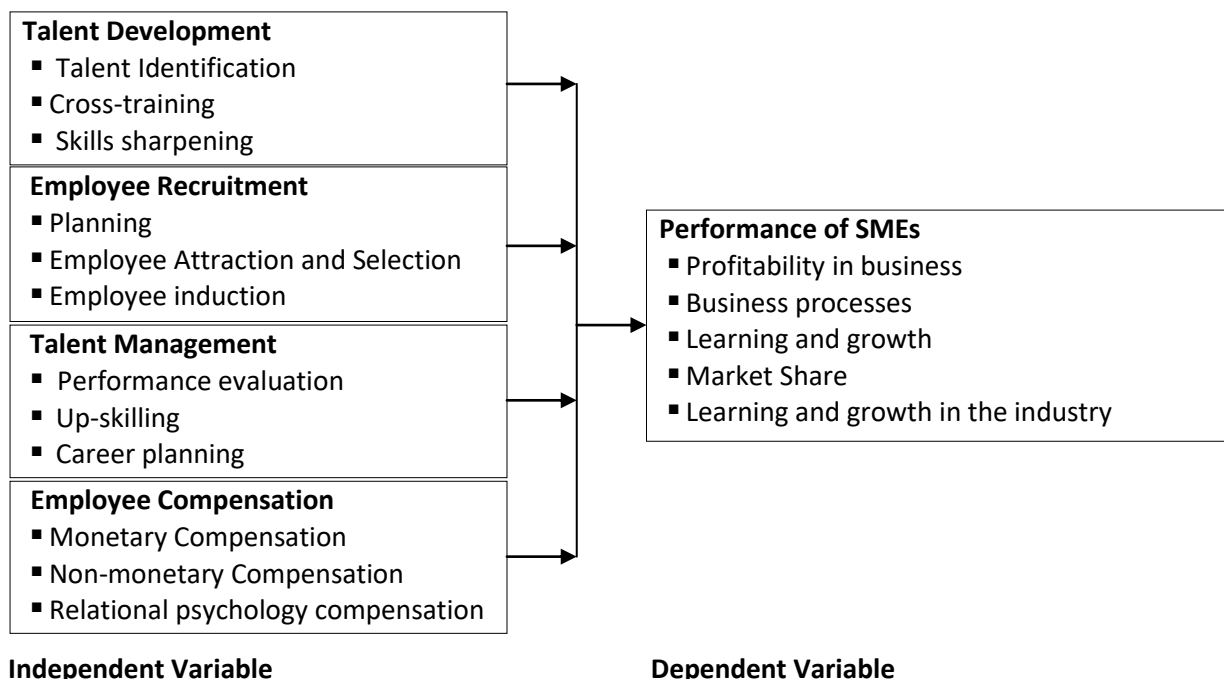


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## METHODOLOGY

This research study used a correlational research design. The target population was drawn from representative top management employees of small and medium enterprises within Nairobi City County. The target population of SMEs within the Nairobi City County comprised of approximately 3000 registered and licensed businesses (Mutunga, 2020)).

In this study, the researcher used stratified sampling technique to select the sample of participants in the data collection. Due to the enormous size of the target population, the researcher used the Yaro Yamane 1967 formula to determine the number of entities that were included in the sample size;

Yaro Yamane formula:  $n = N/[K+N(e)^2]$

N – Population of the Study

n- Sample Size

K- Constant (1)

e- Degree of error expected (0.05)

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} =$$

$$n = \frac{3000}{1 + 3000 \times 0.05^2} = 353 \text{ firms}$$

The data for this research study was collected directly from the questionnaire that the respondents filled in the selected organizations.

A total of 12 participants took part in a pilot test. Ten percent of sample size was calculated to get respondents who were randomly selected from 3 small and medium businesses in Nairobi city County, Kenya to participate in the pilot study, one member from each firm.

An internal consistency analysis using Cronbach's Alpha was done in this study to ascertain how well

the items on all of the questionnaires supplied to the various groups of pilot respondents were associated with one another. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for this study. To process the qualitative data, the researcher used the content analysis method (Lindgren et al., 2020). However, the Statistical Package for Social Science was used to process the quantitative data, and inferential and descriptive statistics were then used by the researcher to determine the study's conclusions (Mishra et al., 2019).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Response Rate

353 questionnaires were issued; 331 of them were completed and returned. As a result, 331 questionnaires were utilized in the research. This resulted in a 94% response rate.

### Descriptive Statistics of the study variables

Each set of the data's characteristics were defined and described using descriptive statistics (Mboya, 2019). Descriptive statistics were presented based on the frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations of the study variables. These variables were talent development, employee recruitment, talent management, employee compensation which were independent variables while performance was dependent variable. Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagrees) to 5 (strongly agrees), with 2 denoting disagreeing, 3 neutral, and 4 agrees. The following conclusions were reached:

### Descriptive Statistics for Talent Development

This study's primary goal was to investigate how talent development affects SMEs' performance. The researcher set out to determine how talent development affects SMEs' performance in order to accomplish this goal. The outcomes are displayed in Table 1.



**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Talent Development**

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
The organizational managers endeavours to identify hidden potential among employees despite their usual designation.	25(7.6)	16(4.8)	25(7.6)	215(65)	50(15.1)
Organizational Managers are cognisant of exemplary performance and they not only compliment but seek to know how it came about.	44(13.3)	56(16.9)	30(9.1)	183(55.3)	18(5.4)
There is a quest to know the reason behind employees' preferences, their dreams and their thinking as pertains what they do among the managerial staff.	27(8.2)	170(51.4)	32(9.7)	98(29.6)	4(1.2)
In our organization, managerial staff are intentional about giving feedback to functional employees on how work is being done and advise or train them on how they can even perform much better.	1(0.3)	21(6.3)	28(8.5)	234(70.7)	47(14.2)
Our organization provides opportunities for self-development such as workshops, seminars, drills, in-house, and external training.	2(0.6)	22(6.6)	18(5.4)	280(84.6)	9(2.7)
Managers in the different sections of the organization redeploy employees into new designations as per their talents and new skills periodically.	16(4.8)	27(8.2)	27(8.2)	237(71.6)	24(7.3)

Source: Researcher, 2024.

The study found that a significant percentage (80.1%) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that organizational managers made efforts to identify hidden potential among employees, even if it went beyond their usual job descriptions. This suggested that talent development practices were actively employed in the organizations surveyed, as they recognized the importance of nurturing latent talents (Masenya, 2022; Yildiz & Esmer, 2023). The study revealed that a substantial majority (60.7%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that organizational managers not only praised exemplary performance but also sought to

understand its contributing factors. This indicated that performance recognition and understanding the drivers of excellence were integral to talent development strategies (Longenecker *et al.*, 2019; Srivastava & Tang, 2022). The findings showed that a significant proportion (80.8%) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that there was an attempt to understand employees' preferences, dreams, and thought processes regarding their work. This reflected a focus on aligning individual aspirations with organizational goals, which was essential for talent development (Dutta *et al.*, 2021). The majority of respondents (85.0%) agreed

or strongly agreed that managerial staff were intentional about providing feedback to employees and offering advice or training for improvement. This was in line with best practices in talent development, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and improvement (Al-Hawary *et al.*, 2018; Nuraini, 2024). An overwhelming majority (87.3%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their organization provided self-development opportunities, which reflected a commitment to employee growth through workshops, seminars, and training, aligning with talent development principles (Dachner *et al.*, 2021). The study found that a substantial portion (78.9%) of respondents either agreed or strongly

agreed that managers in different sections of the organization redeployed employees based on their talents and new skills, an approach which aligned with the principles of talent development; emphasizing placing employees in roles where their strengths could be maximized (Sánchez-Bayón & Aznar, 2021).

### Descriptive Statistics for Employee Recruitment

This study's second goal was to ascertain the impact of employee recruitment on SMEs' performance. The researcher set out to determine how employee recruitment affects SMEs' performance in order to accomplish this goal. The outcomes are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Recruitment**

Aspect	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
There is an established and well defined recruitment plan in our organization.	19(5.7)	153(46.2)	19(5.7)	132(39.9)	8(2.4)
Before any recruitment is conducted in our organization, there is a procedural sequence of sittings to align the exercise with the recruitment plan policy.	9(2.7)	46(13.9)	27(8.2)	227(68.6)	22(6.6)
There is a comprehensive description of the expectations, roles, qualifications and desired set of skills in every vacancy opportunity advertised for in our organization	7(2.1)	9(2.7)	5(1.5)	178(53.8)	132(29.9)
The interview process for our organization is structured with multiple stages such as panel set up, test assignment and job trial day.	1(0.3)	21(6.3)	27(8.2)	239(72.2)	43(13)
There is a structured induction process in our organization for new employees covering the History of the organization, vision and mission, where the organization is at the moment and how their role contributes to the overall function of the entity.	17(5.1)	39(11.8)	20(6)	247(74.6)	8(2.4)

Source: Researcher, 2023

The findings presented in Table 2 reveal the following key insights regarding employee recruitment practices within the surveyed organizations: The data indicates that nearly half of the respondents (46.2%) disagreed (D) or strongly

disagreed (SD) regarding the existence of an established and well-defined recruitment plan in their organization. This suggests a significant level of skepticism or uncertainty among respondents about the presence of a clear and structured

recruitment strategy (Ghielen *et al.*, 2021). A substantial majority (68.6%) of respondents agreed (A) that their organizations adhered to a procedural sequence of sittings before conducting any recruitment, aligning the process with the recruitment plan policy. This reflects a perception among respondents that recruitment practices are systematic and follow established policies and procedures (Priyanto *et al.*, 2021). Over half of the respondents (53.8%) agreed (A) that their organization provided comprehensive job descriptions in every vacancy opportunity. This suggests that a significant portion of respondents believed that job vacancies were advertised with clear expectations, roles, qualifications, and desired skills, aiding potential applicants in making informed decisions (Gill, 2018). The data demonstrates that a substantial majority (72.2%) of respondents agreed (A) that their organizations had a structured interview process with multiple stages, including panel setup, test assignments, and job

trial days. This implies that the interview process was perceived to be organized and thorough, potentially facilitating more effective candidate assessments (van *et al.*, 2021). A significant majority (74.6%) of respondents agreed (A) that their organizations had a structured induction process for new employees. This process encompassed crucial elements such as the organization's history, vision, mission, current status, and the role of the employee within the entity. This suggests that many respondents believed in the presence of a comprehensive onboarding process aimed at integrating new employees effectively (Tett *et al.*, 2021).

### Descriptive Statistics for Talent Management

This study's third goal was to evaluate the impact of talent management on SMEs' performance. The researcher set out to determine how Talent Management affects SMEs' performance in order to accomplish this goal. The outcomes are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Talent Management**

Aspect	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Our company has a set of well laid out objectives for individuals, departments and the entity's performance.	19(5.7)	70(21.1)	28(8.5)	206(62.2)	8(2.4)
Managers and Supervisors in the organization give periodical feedback to evaluate each employee pointing on areas they have done well and areas they may need to improve on.	16(4.8)	27(8.2)	27(8.2)	237(71.6)	24(7.3)
There is at least one performance appraisal model used in our organization.	1(0.3)	21(6.3)	27(8.2)	239(72.2)	43(13)
There is a clearly visible career path for each employee to grow through several ranks in the organization.	24(7.3)	32(9.7)	4(1.2)	170(51.4)	101(30.5)
Our organization recognizes good performance and uses that as a criteria for promotion, salary increment or employee development.	5(1.5)	15(4.5)	7(2.1)	170(51.4)	134(40.5)
There are occasional internal recruitments in our organization.	1(0.3)	21(6.3)	27(8.2)	43(13)	239(72.2)

Source: Researcher, 2024.

The findings presented in Table 3 provide insights into the state of talent management practices

within the surveyed organizations: A significant majority of respondents (62.2%) agreed (A) that

their company had well-defined objectives for individuals, departments, and overall entity performance. This suggests that a substantial portion of respondents believed that the organization's performance objectives were clear and established (Schleicher *et al.*, 2018). A considerable majority (71.6%) of respondents agreed (A) that managers and supervisors in their organization provided periodic feedback to evaluate each employee's performance, highlighting both their strengths and areas for improvement. This indicates a commitment to performance assessment and improvement (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). The data shows that a substantial majority (72.2%) of respondents agreed (A) that there was at least one performance appraisal model used in their organization. This suggests that many respondents perceived the presence of structured performance evaluation processes (Pulakos *et al.*, 2019). A significant proportion (30.5%) of respondents agreed (A) that there was a clearly visible career path for each employee to progress through various ranks in the organization. This

implies that a portion of the respondents felt that their organization provided opportunities for career advancement and growth (Noe *et al.*, 2019). The data indicates that a substantial majority (91.9%) of respondents agreed (A) that their organization recognized good performance and used it as a criterion for promotion, salary increments, or employee development. This reflects a strong focus on performance-based rewards and employee recognition (Lawler *et al.*, 2022). The table shows that a significant majority (72.2%) of respondents agreed (A) that there were occasional internal recruitments in their organization. This suggests that internal talent mobility and promotion from within the organization were recognized practices (Cascio *et al.*, 2021).

#### Descriptive Statistics for Employee Compensation

Evaluating the impact of employee compensation on the performance of SMEs was the study's fourth goal. The researcher set out to determine how employee compensation affects SMEs' performance in order to accomplish this goal. The outcomes are displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Compensation**

Aspect	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Our organization recognizes and pays for overtime work and other work related expenses.	1(0.3)	21(6.3)	19(5.7)	43(13)	247(74.6)
There are provisions for retirement package, medical cover, paid leave and flexible working schedules in our organization.	19(5.7)	23(6.9)	9(2.7)	128(38.7)	152(45.9)
The organization recognizes exemplary performance and rewards the same through pay increase, one time financial bonuses or paid trips and other non-monetary benefits.	0(0)	0(0)	26(7.9)	59(17.8)	246(74.3)
There are annual or periodical salary reviews for all the employees in our organization.	7(2.1)	28(8.5)	24(7.3)	230(69.5)	42(12.7)

Source: Researcher, 2024.

The findings presented in Table 4 offer insights into the compensation practices within the surveyed

organizations: A significant majority of respondents (74.6%) strongly agreed (SA) that their organization

recognized and paid for overtime work and other work-related expenses. This suggests a commitment to fair compensation for additional work and associated costs (Guo *et al.*, 2020). The data indicates that a substantial portion of respondents agreed (A) that there were provisions for retirement packages, medical coverage, paid leave, and flexible working schedules in their organization. This reflects a focus on employee benefits and work-life balance (Larkin, 2019). The majority of respondents (74.3%) strongly agreed (SA) that their organization recognized exemplary performance and rewarded it through pay increases, one-time financial bonuses, paid trips, and other non-monetary benefits. This reflects a performance-based reward system and recognition culture (Noorazem *et al.*, 2021). The table shows

that a significant majority (69.5%) agreed (A) that there were annual or periodical salary reviews for all employees in their organization. This indicates a commitment to reviewing and adjusting compensation to align with market conditions and individual performance (Guo *et al.*, 2020). A significant proportion (69.5%) of respondents agreed (A) that their organization made both monetary and non-monetary benefits available and raised awareness about them among employees. This implies that the organization focused on ensuring that employees were informed about the full range of benefits offered (Larkin, 2019).

#### Descriptive Statistics for Performance of SMEs

The Characteristic Data to assess SMEs' Performance is portrayed in Table 5 below;

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Performance of SMEs**

Aspect	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
After training and workshops, it is required in our organization that we begin to implement any newly issued procedures and knowledge.	23(6.9)	0(0)	0(0)	249(75.2)	59(17.8)
There are periodical reviews on our business operations following departmental concerns on wastage, delays, bottlenecks and gaps in daily operations.	24(7.3)	32(9.7)	4(1.2)	170(51.4)	101(30.5)
A huge number of our customers are returning clients with a prolonged loyalty to the company.	16(4.8)	19(5.7)	7(2.1)	129(39)	160(48.3)
Our business has made increasing profits in the past subsequent financial trading periods.	2(0.6)	20(6)	21(6.3)	240(72.5)	48(14.5)
Our business is performing as per our expectation in the industry and market space at large.	8(2.4)	31(9.4)	29(8.8)	211(63.7)	52(15.7)

Source: Researcher, 2024.

The findings presented in Table 5 offer insights into the performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as perceived by the surveyed organizations: A significant majority of respondents (75.2%) strongly agreed (SA) that, in their organization, it was required to implement newly issued procedures and knowledge after training and workshops. This suggests a commitment to

knowledge application and a proactive approach to integrating learning into daily operations (Robertson *et al.*, 2021). The data shows that a substantial majority (51.4%) agreed (A) that there were periodical reviews of business operations following departmental concerns related to wastage, delays, bottlenecks, and gaps in daily operations. This indicates a focus on continuous



improvement and addressing operational issues (Camilleri, 2021). A significant portion (48.3%) of respondents strongly agreed (SA) that a large number of their customers were returning clients with prolonged loyalty to the company. This reflects a high level of customer retention and loyalty, which is a positive indicator of business performance (Alafeef, 2020). The table shows that a significant majority (72.5%) agreed (A) that their business had been making increasing profits in the

past subsequent financial trading periods. This indicates a positive financial performance trend over time, which is often a key performance indicator for SMEs (Bartolacci *et al.*, 2020). A significant majority (63.7%) agreed (A) that their business was performing as per their expectations in the industry and the market space at large. This suggests a positive perception of the organization's market performance and alignment with its strategic goals (Hartani *et al.*, 2021).

### Means and Standard Deviations of the Study Variables

**Table 6: Means and Standard Deviations of the Study Variables**

Statement	Mean	SD	Overall Mean	Overall SD
Talent development: The organizational managers endeavours to identify hidden potential among employees despite their usual designation.	3.75	1.021	3.51	0.911
Talent development: Organizational Managers are cognisant of exemplary performance and they not only compliment but seek to know how it came about.	3.23	1.193		
Talent development: There is a quest to know the reason behind employees' preferences, their dreams and their thinking as pertains what they do among the managerial staff.	2.64	1.03		
Talent development: In our organization, managerial staff are intentional about giving feedback to functional employees on how work is being done and advise or train them on how they can even perform much better.	3.92	0.709		
Talent development: Our organization provides opportunities for self-development such as workshops, seminars, drills, in-house, and external training.	3.82	0.609		
Talent development: Managers in the different sections of the organization redeploy employees into new designations as per their talents and new skills periodically.	3.68	0.904		
Employee recruitment: There is an established and well defined recruitment plan in our organization.	2.87	1.084	3.37	0.926
Employee recruitment: Before any recruitment is conducted in our organization, there is a procedural sequence of sittings to align the exercise with the recruitment plan policy.	3.63	0.9		
Employee recruitment: There is a comprehensive description of the expectations, roles, qualifications and desired set of skills in every vacancy opportunity advertised for in our organization	2.85	1.031		
Employee recruitment: The interview process for our organization is structured with multiple stages such as panel set up, test assignment and job trial day.	3.91	0.697		
Employee recruitment: There is a structured induction process in our organization for new employees covering the History of the organization, vision and mission, where the organization is at the moment and how their role contributes to the overall functio	3.57	0.916		
Talent management: Our company has a set of well laid out	3.34	1.022	3.4	0.896

objectives for individuals, departments and the entity's performance.				
Talent management: Managers and Supervisors in the organization give periodical feedback to evaluate each employee pointing on areas they have done well and areas they may need to improve on.	3.68	0.904		
Talent management: There is at least one performance appraisal model used in our organization.	3.91	0.697		
Talent management: There is a clearly visible career path for each employee to grow through several ranks in the organization.	2.67	1.026		
Talent management: Our organization recognizes good performance and uses that as a criteria for promotion, salary increment or employee development.	2.9	1.028		
Talent management: There are occasional internal recruitments in our organization.	3.91	0.697		
Employee compensation: Our organization recognizes and pays for overtime work and other work related expenses.	3.94	0.682	3.74	0.781
Employee compensation: There are provisions for retirement package, medical cover, paid leave and flexible working schedules in our organization.	3.01	1.09		
Employee compensation: The organization recognizes exemplary performance and rewards the same through pay increase, one time financial bonuses or paid trips and other non-monetary benefits.	4.1	0.498		
Employee compensation: There are annual or periodical salary reviews for all the employees in our organization.	3.82	0.836		
Employee compensation: The organization makes an awareness of both monetary and non-monetary benefits available among the employees.	3.84	0.801		
Performance of SMEs: After training and workshops, it is required in our organization that we begin to implement any newly issued procedures and knowledge.	4.11	0.486	3.51	0.838
Performance of SMEs: There are periodical reviews on our business operations following departmental concerns on wastage, delays, bottlenecks and gaps in daily operations.	2.67	1.026		
Performance of SMEs: A huge number of our customers are returning clients with a prolonged loyalty to the company.	3.04	1.074		
Performance of SMEs: Our business has made increasing profits in the past subsequent financial trading periods.	3.94	0.709		
Performance of SMEs: Our business is performing as per our expectation in the industry and market space at large.	3.81	0.896		

Source: Researcher, 2024

### Talent Development

The organizational managers' efforts to identify hidden potential among employees, regardless of their usual roles, were perceived positively, with a mean score of 3.75. This suggests that there is recognition of untapped talent within the organization.

Organizational managers' awareness of exemplary performance and their willingness to understand the reasons behind it received a mean score of 3.23. While this score is lower, it still indicates a generally positive attitude towards recognizing and understanding outstanding performance.

The quest to understand employees' preferences, dreams, and thoughts related to their work, as perceived by managerial staff, received a mean score of 2.64, indicating that there may be room for improvement in this area.

Managerial staff's intentional efforts to provide feedback and guidance to functional employees on performance received a high mean score of 3.92, suggesting a strong commitment to employee development.

The provision of opportunities for self-development, including workshops, seminars, and training, received a mean score of 3.82, indicating a proactive approach to fostering employee growth.

Managers' practice of periodically redeploying employees into new roles based on their talents and skills received a mean score of 3.68, indicating a positive approach to talent utilization.

#### **Employee Recruitment**

An established and well-defined recruitment plan within the organization received a mean score of 2.87, suggesting room for improvement in this aspect.

The existence of a procedural sequence to align recruitment with the organization's plan received a mean score of 3.63, indicating a more structured approach.

A comprehensive description of expectations, qualifications, and desired skills in job vacancies had a mean score of 2.85, indicating room for improvement in clarity.

A structured interview process with multiple stages was well-received, with a mean score of 3.91, suggesting a systematic approach to candidate selection.

The presence of a structured induction process, which covers the organization's history, vision, and mission, received a mean score of 3.57, indicating a positive onboarding approach for new employees.

#### **Talent Management**

The organization's well-laid-out objectives for individuals, departments, and entity performance received a mean score of 3.34, indicating a clear direction for employee and organizational goals.

Managers and supervisors giving periodic feedback for employee evaluation had a mean score of 3.68, suggesting a commitment to performance assessment.

The existence of at least one performance appraisal model in the organization was well-received, with a mean score of 3.91, indicating a structured approach to performance assessment.

A clearly visible career path for employee growth received a mean score of 2.67, suggesting potential for improvement in career development planning.

The organization's recognition of good performance and its use as a criterion for promotion, salary increments, and employee development had a mean score of 2.9, indicating room for enhancement.

The occasional occurrence of internal recruitments received a mean score of 3.91, indicating a proactive approach to talent sourcing within the organization.

#### **Employee Compensation**

The organization's recognition and payment for overtime work and related expenses received a high mean score of 3.94, reflecting a commitment to fair compensation practices.

Provisions for retirement packages, medical coverage, paid leave, and flexible working schedules had a mean score of 3.01, indicating a positive approach to employee benefits.

The organization's recognition of exemplary performance through pay increases, bonuses, and non-monetary rewards had a high mean score of 4.1, showing a strong emphasis on recognizing outstanding performance.

The presence of annual or periodic salary reviews received a mean score of 3.82, indicating a structured approach to salary management.

Making employees aware of both monetary and non-monetary benefits had a mean score of 3.84, suggesting transparent communication of available benefits.

**Performance of SMEs**

The requirement for implementing newly issued procedures and knowledge after training and workshops received a high mean score of 4.11, indicating a strong commitment to practical application.

Periodical reviews of business operations to address concerns such as wastage, delays, and bottlenecks

received a mean score of 2.67, suggesting room for improvement in addressing operational challenges.

A significant number of returning and loyal customers received a mean score of 3.04, indicating customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Consistently increasing profits in past financial periods received a high mean score of 3.94, demonstrating financial success.

The perception that the business is performing as expected in the industry and market space received a mean score of 3.81, indicating alignment with performance expectations.

**Table 7: Overall Descriptive Results per the Research Objectives**

STATEMENTS	Mean	SD
Influence of Talent Development	3.51	0.911
Influence of Employee Recruitment	3.37	0.926
Influence of Talent Management	3.4	0.896
Influence of Employee Compensation	3.74	0.781
performance of SMEs	3.51	0.838

Source: Researcher, 2024

The overall descriptive results for the several statements pertaining to the research objectives are shown in Table 7. The table sheds light on the opinions and beliefs of the participants about how many factors affect the success of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). The standard deviation for the influence of talent development was 0.911 and the mean was 3.51 respectively. Participants believe that SME performance is moderately improved by talent development on average. The standard deviation shows some variation in the responses from the participants, indicating that although people's perceptions of this element are typically good, there are variations in the intensity of people's feelings. The mean and standard deviation of the influence of employee recruitment were 3.37 and 0.926, respectively. The majority of participants think that hiring new staff has a somewhat favorable effect on SME

performance. The increased standard deviation indicates that participant judgments about the impact of recruiting are more inconsistent. The standard deviation for the influence of talent management was 0.896 and the mean was 3.4 on SME's performance. Talent development and talent management are both thought to have a somewhat good impact on SME success. There is some variance in participant replies, though, suggesting that not everyone may have a high opinion of talent management. The standard deviation for employee compensation was 0.781 and the mean was 3.74 respectively. With comparatively little difference in participant responses, employee salary is perceived as having a moderately significant positive influence on SME performance. The lower standard deviation suggests that there is a more consistent positive perception regarding the impact of compensation. Performance of SMEs had a mean of 3.51 and a

standard deviation of 0.838. The overall performance of SMEs, as rated by the participants, has a moderately positive evaluation. There is some variability in how participants view SME performance, but it is generally positive.

The findings indicate that the participants tend to have a moderately positive perception of the influence of talent development, employee recruitment, talent management, employee compensation, and SME performance. Employee compensation appears to be the most positively

perceived factor, with lower variation in responses, while employee recruitment shows slightly more variability in participant opinions. These results provide valuable insights into how these factors are perceived in the context of SMEs and can inform decision-making and strategies in this sector.

#### Study Variables Inferential Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis and correlation are examples of inferential statistics. A significance threshold of 0.05 was used for the analysis.

**Table 8: Descriptive Results**

STATEMENTS	Mean	SD
Influence of Talent Development	3.85	0.827
Influence of Employee Recruitment	3.53	0.826
Influence of Talent management	3.80	1.026
Influence of Employee Compensation	3.69	1.008
performance of small and medium businesses in Nairobi City County Kenya	3.33	1.153

Source: Researcher, 20242

The mean and standard deviation (SD) of the replies to five statements pertaining to the study's goal of determining how entrepreneurial talent engagement practices affect small and medium-sized enterprises' performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya, are displayed in the table. The participants somewhat agreed as indicated by the mean score of 3.85 for the statement "Influence of Talent Development" that the practice of entrepreneurial talent engagement improves the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises. The responses were fairly distributed, as indicated by the 0.827 standard deviation.

The participants moderately agreed as indicated by the mean score of 3.53 for the statement "Influence of Employee Recruitment" that this approach of entrepreneurial talent engagement improves the performance of small and medium-sized firms. The responses were fairly distributed, as indicated by a standard deviation of 0.826.

The mean score for the statement "Influence of Talent management" was 3.80, indicating that the

participants agreed to a moderate extent that this Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement practice has a positive impact on performance of small and medium businesses. The standard deviation was 1.026, indicating that the responses were somewhat dispersed.

The participants moderately agreed as indicated by the mean score of 3.69 for the statement "Influence of Employee Compensation" that the practice of entrepreneurial talent engagement improves the performance of small and medium-sized firms. The responses were fairly distributed, as indicated by the standard deviation of 1.008.

Finally, the mean score for the statement "Performance of small and medium businesses" was 3.33, indicating that the participants perceived the performance of small and medium businesses to be moderately good. The standard deviation was 1.153, indicating that the responses were relatively dispersed.

Overall, the mean scores suggest that the participants generally agreed that Entrepreneurial



Talent Engagement practices have a positive impact on performance of small and medium businesses, but there was some variability in the responses. The

standard deviations indicate that there were diverse opinions among the participants.

### Regression Results

**Table 9: Regression Results**

Objective	R <sup>2</sup>	coefficient
To establish the effect of talent development on performance of small and medium enterprises in Nairobi City County, Kenya.	0.703	0.693,p=0.000
To analyse effect of employee recruitment on performance of small and medium businesses in Nairobi City County, Kenya	0.55	0.519,0.044
To establish effect of talent management on performance of small and medium businesses in Nairobi City County Kenya.	0.328	0.489,0.003
To find out the effect of employee compensation on performance of small and medium businesses in Nairobi City County Kenya.	0.835	0.788, p=0.000
Joint effect	0.891,p=0.000	B1=0.11, b2=0.078, b3=0.170,b4=0.549

Source: Researcher, 2024.

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the study examined the influence Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement practices on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The research investigated the impact of four Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement practices, namely talent development, employee recruitment, talent management, and employee compensation on performance.

In Nairobi City County, entrepreneurial talent engagement strategies are essential for improving the performance of small and medium-sized businesses. These practices, including talent development, employee recruitment, talent management, and employee compensation, were all found to have a significant and positive impact.

The findings highlight the importance of taking a holistic approach to talent engagement. Businesses that effectively integrate these practices are better positioned for improved performance. This emphasizes the interconnectedness of these practices and the need for a comprehensive strategy.

Talent development, through training and skill enhancement, emerged as a vital factor in adapting to changing business needs. Small and medium enterprises should prioritize continuous learning and development opportunities for their employees.

Effective recruitment strategies, such as clear job descriptions and a wide range of recruitment channels, are crucial for attracting the right talent. Becoming an employer of choice and employing structured interview processes were also associated with performance improvements.

Talent management practices, particularly leadership development and performance management, were identified as key drivers of business success. Small and medium enterprises should focus on developing future leaders and setting clear expectations for their employees.

Employee compensation, when executed transparently and accountably, has a substantial impact on business performance. This practice should align with budgets and adhere to ethical standards, ensuring efficient resource allocation

Policymakers should consider these findings when developing strategies to support small and medium enterprises in Nairobi City County. Encouraging Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement practices can lead to improved economic growth and sustainability.

For business owners and human resource managers, these findings provide actionable insights. Implementing robust talent engagement practices and considering their collective impact is essential for achieving better performance in small and medium enterprises.

The study's conclusions and findings lead to the following recommendations:

It is advised that managers and owners of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) implement thorough Entrepreneurial Talent Engagement strategies in order to improve the performance of SMEs. This should include a well-rounded approach that encompasses talent development, employee recruitment, talent management, and employee compensation. Encouraging a synergy between these practices can maximize the impact on performance.

SMEs should prioritize continuous employee training and skill development programs. This will ensure that employees are well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of the business. Regular training,

workshops, and mentorship opportunities can help enhance skills and capabilities, leading to improved performance and adaptability in a competitive market.

To attract the right talent, SMEs should revamp their recruitment practices. This includes developing clear and accurate job descriptions, utilizing various recruitment channels (online job portals, social media, networking events), and employing structured interview processes with a focus on behavior-based questions. Additionally, promoting the organization as an employer of choice can help in drawing top talent.

Talent management is a critical aspect of SME success. Leadership development programs should be offered to groom and retain talent, ensuring that potential future leaders are well-prepared to drive the company's success. Put in place efficient performance management tools that connect individual goals to corporate objectives, offer frequent feedback, and clearly define expectations.

To boost performance, it is essential for SMEs to maintain transparent and accountable compensation practices. This includes aligning employee compensation with budgets, adhering to legal and ethical standards, and promoting integrity in all aspects of compensation. Efficient resource allocation, timely delivery of services, and adherence to quality standards should be priorities.

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