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# EFFECT OF TALENT ATTRACTION PRACTICES ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN COUNTY PUBLIC SERVICE IN NYANZA REGION, KENYA

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## ABSTRACT

*Workforce skills and skilled workers are increasingly in short supply and for any organization to remain competitive, it is crucial that they attract a skilled and committed workforce. This study sought to determine the effect of talent attraction practices on organizational commitment in county public service in Nyanza region, Kenya. The study was guided by the Resource based view theory and adopted a cross-sectional correlational design with a study population of 9258 which comprised county public service board members, human resource directors and public service employees working in the devolved ministries in the six counties in Nyanza region at the time of the study. A sample size of 404 was determined where the researcher employed stratified random sampling with each county representing a stratum from which a random sample was taken in proportion to the stratum's size using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample size determination table and then the subsets of the strata pooled to form a random sample. Construct and content validity were ensured by seeking the opinion of experts. The Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha for the questionnaire was .826 indicating a high level of reliability. Descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentages, means and inferential statistics of correlation and regression analysis were used. The null hypothesis was tested at 5% significance level. Pearson's product moment correlation results showed that a significant positive relationship existed between talent attraction practices and organizational commitment ( $r = .261, p = .000$ ), meaning that talent attraction practices influenced organizational commitment in county public service. The study therefore concluded that talent attraction practices have an important role to play in building commitment in county public service if done effectively. The study recommends that human resource policies and processes in county public service should emphasize the importance of talent attraction in attaining organizational commitment.*

**KEYWORDS:** Talent attraction, Organizational commitment

## INTRODUCTION

The ability to attract the right talent to the organization depends on how the potential applicants view the organization and whether they share the same values of the organization (Abraham, 2011). Nickson and Hurrell (2008) argue that there are many problems associated with talent recruitment but they can be improved by attracting the employees with affective commitment and that commitment can be influenced by the policies and practices of recruitment. Commitment-oriented recruitment is strongly related to the expressive communications and appeals to values and beliefs, and also on the degree of their congruency with organizational values (Weiner, 2010). When organizations have high level of commitment they can get a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining employees in a competitive environment (Boon, Safa, & Arumugam, 2006).

It is also commonly accepted that employees create an important source of competitive advantage for firms (Barney, 1991) and the attraction and retention of committed employees has become an increasingly significant aspect of building organizational capabilities to ensure sustained competitiveness. The public service especially in Kenya, faces a myriad of challenges and one of the greatest challenges in its mandate delivery is the recruitment of suitable candidates due to factors such as corruption, inefficiency, high attrition rates, poor performance, low staff morale, shortage of critical skill, lack of transparency and accountability, which have been found to affect the recruitment process leading to non-committed employees. The question of ethnicity has also impinged heavily on the workplace and manifests itself mostly through favouritism in recruitment, career advancement and provision of training opportunities. The public service has also been characterized by exodus of employees joining the private sector and other employment opportunities. A survey conducted in 2015 by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission in Kenya reported rampant corruption and malpractices in counties especially in the staffing function due to nepotism and favouritism.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study was to determine the effect of talent attraction practices on organizational commitment in county public service in Nyanza region, Kenya.

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

This study was guided by the null hypothesis that there is no significant effect of talent attraction practices on organizational commitment in county public service in Nyanza region, Kenya.

## EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Nobarieidishe, Chamanifard and Nikpour (2014) investigated the relationship between talent

management (talent attraction, talent development and talent maintenance) and organizational commitment in Iranian banking sector using descriptive and correlative design. They established a positive relationship between talent attraction and organizational commitment. Halvaei and Ejlali (2015) investigated the relationship between talent management (talent absorption, alignment and maintenance, development and growth) and organizational commitment. Their results established that talent absorption had a significant effect on organizational commitment ( $\beta=.39$ ,  $p=.01$ ). Kheirkhah, M., Akbarpouran V., Haqhani H. (2016) used a descriptive cross-sectional design to study the relationship between talent management (talent absorption, talent conservation and talent development) and organizational commitment in midwives working in Iran University of medical sciences. The study found out that there was a correlation between talent attraction and organizational commitment ( $r = 0.36$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ).

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

Kothari (2014) defines research design as the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. This study research adopted a cross-sectional correlational research design which allows researchers to describe the characteristics of a population and allows observations to be made at a single point in time. The study was carried out in Nyanza region which included Kisumu, Siaya, Homabay, Migori, Kisii and Nyamira counties.

### Study Population and Sample size

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) define a target population as an entire group of individuals, events or objects having a common observable characteristic or the aggregate of all that conforms to a given specification. The target population in this study comprised all county public service board members (42), HR officers (HROs) and the civil servants (9216) working in the devolved ministries in the six counties in Nyanza region at the time of the study totaling to 9258 respondents. From this population, a total sample size of 404 was determined using Krejcie & Morgan, (1970) table which showed that a total population of 9216 is equivalent to a sample size of 368 while a population of 42 is equivalent to 36 aggregating to 404. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents in all the six counties, where each county represented a different stratum. The researcher employed purposive sampling to select key respondents from each of the county public service boards and Human resource officers who have the responsibility of acquiring talent at the county level and then a random sample from each stratum was taken

in proportion to the stratum's size and the subsets of the strata were pooled to form a random sample. Both questionnaires and interviews were used for collecting primary data.

### **Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments**

Kothari (2014) defines validity as the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. Validity was ensured through designing of the relevant questions and also seeking the opinion of the experts who understood the area well to ensure the validity of the entire research questions. Reliability, which is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials was ensured through a Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha which was used to determine the consistency of the questionnaire items. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim, (1999), a Cronbach alpha coefficient of greater than 0.75 is generally considered reliable. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the entire questionnaire was 0.826 which is above the set threshold of 0.75 and hence the instrument was reliable.

### **Data Analysis**

Data generated from the questionnaires and interviews was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and means) and inferential statistics (Correlation analysis and Regression analysis and data was analyzed at 5% level of significance).

### **Regression Analysis Model for Hypotheses testing**

$$y = \beta_{01} + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon_i \text{ for Direct Relationship}$$

Where:

Y= value of the dependent variable (**Organizational Commitment**),  $\beta_1$  = coefficient of independent variable

$X_1$  = independent variable (**attraction practices**),  $\epsilon_i$  = error term, 0.05, which captures any other variable that may not have been included in the equation

## **RESULTS**

### **Demographic data**

The results showed that a majority of respondents were male, 233 (71.9%) and the remaining 91(28.1%) were female. Majority of the respondents 79 (24.4%) were 50 and above years old followed by 64 (19.8%) who were aged between 36-40 years, then 55 (17%) who were between 31-35 years old, 45 (13.9%) who were between 41-45 years old, 35 (10.8%) who were between 46-50 years old, 28 (8.6%) who were aged between 26-30 years and 18 (5.6%) who were between 20-25 years old. Regarding the level of education of respondents, a majority of the respondents, 171 (52.8%) were degree holders followed by 79 (24.4%) who were diploma holders and lastly 74 (22.8%) who held a master's degree. The county governments had ten departments devolved and

results show that majority of the respondents worked in the finance department, 15.1%, Public service and Agriculture each had 13.3%, Trade 11.1%, Health 9.9%, ICT and Water each 9.3%, Lands 8%, Education 5.9% and Roads had 4.9%. For the three levels of management, 50.6% were at the lower level, 42% were middle level managers and 7.4% were top level managers. In terms of seniority indicated as period or number of years the respondents had worked for their current employer, results showed 39.5% had worked in their counties for a period of between 6-10 years, 27.2% had worked for their current employer for 3-5 years, 21.6% had worked for 1-2 years and 11.7% had worked for less than a year.

### **Descriptive analysis**

Data collected from all the respondents through the questionnaire and interview schedule was subjected to descriptive analysis by use of frequencies, mean scores and standard deviation and employee opinion was measured on a five point likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. The results indicated that a majority of the respondents agreed 20(6.2%) and strongly agreed 135(41.7%) that their employer identified potential top performers by analyzing the needed skills and experience, mean (SD) of 3.03 (1.151). 136 (42%) disagreed and 22 (6.6%) strongly disagreed that their employer sent recruiting messages that highlighted the employer side of the exchange relationship, mean (SD) of 2.89 (1.096) and a majority of employees disagreed 146 (42%) and strongly disagreed, 32 (9.9%) that their employer recognized and addressed commitment congruence, mean (SD) of 2.73 (1.121). On the issue of whether their employer sent recruiting messages that emphasized possibilities of career movement, a majority of the respondents, 171 (52.8%) disagreed with 31 (9.6%) strongly disagreeing, mean (SD) of 2.58 (1.048). Most respondents also disagreed and strongly disagreed that their employer targeted qualified applicants, mean (SD) of 2.93 (1.204) as indicated by 127 (39.2%), 30 (9.3%) and that their employer sent recruitment messages that extolled attractive job features, mean (SD) of 2.60 (1.154) as affirmed by 153 (47.2%), 46 (14.2%) who disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. A majority of employees also disagreed 162 (50%), 154 (47.5%) and strongly disagreed 39 (12%), 35 (10.8%) that their employer defined and understood their talent pool, mean (SD) of 2.56 (1.064) and that they recruited existing employees to enhance engagement, mean (SD) of 2.66 (1.119) respectively.

The results also indicated that 147 (45.4%) disagreed and 23(7.1%) strongly disagreed that their employer highlighted organizational values and commitment reciprocity when recruiting externally, mean (SD) of 2.76 (1.061), 159(49.1%) disagreed and 21(6.5%) strongly disagreed that their employer did an

assessment of employee values and beliefs and the degree of their congruency with organizational values during recruitment, mean (SD) of 2.69 (1.018) and that 151(46.6%) disagreed and 24(7.4% strongly disagreed) to the statement that their employer integrated employees with organizational mission, mean (SD) of 2.76 (1.090). The study results also indicated that a majority of respondents 176(54.3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed 23(7.1%) that their employer identified candidates who were best suited to the job and organizational culture, mean (SD) of 2.64 (1.063), 197(60.8%) disagreed and 24 (7.4%) strongly disagreed that their employer sought out applicant pools comprised of individuals committed to course other than themselves, mean (SD) of 2.52 (1.027), a majority 190 (58.6%) agreed and strongly agreed 83 (25.6%) that their employer mostly recruited externally, mean (SD) of 3.94 (0.962) and 178 (54.9%) disagreed and strongly disagreed 57(17.6%) that their employer mostly recruited internally. In addition, employees expressed lack of professionalism and competency during hiring and that the hiring criterion was mostly based on know who rather than know how. This led to wrong deployment where experts were not placed in their technical areas especially at the level of directorate and below. There were cases where teachers were serving as Human resource officers or even accountants and security personnel serving as county executives in some dockets.

### **Organizational Commitment in county public service**

Organizational commitment was measured using three aspects: affective, continuance and normative. Regarding affective commitment, results indicated that a majority of the respondents disagreed 128 (39.5%) and strongly disagreed 21 (6.5%) that they would be very happy to spend the rest of their career with their current employers, mean (SD) of 3.08 (1.246), that they felt as if their organization's problems were their own, mean (SD) of 2.85 (1.169) as affirmed by 138 (42.6%) who disagreed and 29 (9%) strongly disagreed respectively to this statement. Further, 214 (66%) disagreed and 19 (5.9%) strongly disagreed that they did not feel like part of the family at their organization, mean (SD) of 2.44 (0.941), that they did not feel emotionally attached to their organization, mean (SD) of 2.55 (1.005) as indicated by 198 (61.1%) who disagreed and 19 (5.9%) strongly disagreed to that issue and that they did not feel a strong sense of belonging to their organization, mean (SD) of 2.41 (0.967) as confirmed by a majority who disagreed 204 (63%) and strongly disagreed 32 (9.9%) respectively. On the other hand, 123 (38%) agreed and 35 (10.8%) strongly agreed that they enjoyed discussing their organization with people outside it, mean (SD) of 3.12 (1.188). A majority also agreed 139 (42.9%) and strongly agreed 33(10.2) that they could

easily become as attached to another organization as they are to their current employer, mean (SD) of 3.20 (1.156) and that their current organization had a great deal of personal meaning for them, mean (SD) of 3.29 (1.139) as portrayed by 149 (46%) who agreed and 36 (11.1%) strongly agreed respectively. Regarding the perception of employees on continuance commitment in county public service, results showed that most of the employees disagreed 198 (61.1%) and strongly disagreed 44 (13.6%) that were not afraid of what would happen if they quit their job without having another one lined up, mean (SD) of 3.06 (1.217). They also disagreed 151 (46.6%) and strongly disagreed 30 (9.3%) that it would be very hard for them to leave their organization even if they wanted to, mean (SD) of 2.83 (1.235) and that too much in their life would be disrupted if they decided they wanted to leave their organization, mean (SD) of 3.06 (1.217) as indicated by 128 (39.5%) who disagreed and 23 (7.1%) strongly disagreed to the statement.

Additionally, a majority of employees disagreed 136 (42%) and strongly disagreed 24 (7.4%) that it wouldn't be too costly for them to leave their organization, mean (SD) of 2.89 (1.149) and that they felt they had too few options to consider leaving their organization, mean (SD) of 2.89 (1.178) as shown by 146 (45.1%) who disagreed and 24 (7.4%) strongly disagreed respectively. They also disagreed 145 (44.8%) and strongly disagreed 24 (7.4%) that one of the few serious consequences of leaving their current organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives, mean (SD) of 2.93 (1.217) and that one of the major reasons they continued working for their organization was that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice, mean (SD) of 2.90 (1.222) as indicated by 146 (45.1%) who disagreed and 26 (8%) strongly disagreed respectively to the concerned issue. However, 153 (47.2%) agreed and 40 (12.3%) strongly agreed that staying with their current organization was a matter of necessity as much as they desired, mean (SD) of 3.36 (1.123). Results on normative commitment indicated that most respondents 187 (57.7%) agreed and 37(11.4) strongly agreed to the statement that people these days moved from company to company too often, mean (SD) of 3.57 (0.998) and that a major reason they continued to work for their organization was that they believed that loyalty was important and therefore felt a sense of moral obligation to remain, mean (SD) of 3.06 (1.202) as affirmed by 121 (37.3%) who agreed and 48 (14.8%) strongly agreed respectively. On the contrary, majority of employees disagreed 197 (60.8%) and 38 (11.7%) strongly disagreed that they did not believe that a person must always be loyal to their organization, mean (SD) of 2.40 (1.010), that jumping from organization to organization did not seem at all unethical to them, mean (SD) of 2.96 (1.174) as shown

by 132 (40.7%) who disagreed and 20 (6.2%) and strongly disagreed respectively.

Most employees also disagreed 175 (54%) and strongly disagreed 35 (10.8%) to the statement that if they got another offer for a better job elsewhere they would not feel it was right to leave their organization, mean (SD) of 2.58 (1.120), and that they were taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization, mean (SD) of 2.88 (1.170) to which 145 (44.8%) disagreed and 22 (6.8%) strongly disagreed respectively. Further, 176 (54.3%) disagreed and 25 (7.7%) strongly disagreed that things were better in the days when people stayed with one organization for most of their careers, mean (SD) of 2.65 (1.081) and that they did not think that wanting to be a company man/woman is sensible anymore, mean (SD) of 2.78 (1.092), as confirmed by 165 (50.9%) who disagreed and 16(4.9) strongly disagreed respectively.

### **Relationship between talent attraction practices and organizational commitment**

Pearson Product moment correlation test results revealed a positive, statistically significant relationship between talent attraction and organizational commitment ( $r=.261$ ,  $p=000$ ). This meant that the two variables correlated. The study findings coordinate with those of Nobarieidishe et al. (2014) who according to their research findings, established that there was a positive relationship between attracting talents and organizational commitment of employees in international division of Tejarat Bank in Iran ( $0.127$ ,  $p>0.01$ ). The same findings were also established by Kheirkhah et al. (2016) who found out that there was a correlation between talent attraction (absorption) and organizational commitment ( $r = 0.36$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ).

### **Hypotheses Tests**

Regression analysis was used to test for direct relationship for the research hypothesis. The summary results of hypothesis are presented in table 1.1 from which study findings indicated a statistically insignificant coefficient because the p value is greater than 0.05. The regression equation thus is as follows:

i)  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_p + \epsilon$  becomes:

ii)  $O_c = 56.925 + 0.140 T_p + 0.050\epsilon$

Where:

$O_c$  = organizational commitment,  $T_p$  = talent attraction practices,  $\epsilon$  = error term

The study adopted a null hypotheses approach and therefore the study hypothesis was affirmed. The regression results showed that talent attraction was insignificant ( $\beta=.140$ ,  $p=.085$ ), explaining a 14% variation in organizational commitment, thus did not have a significant effect on organizational commitment because the p value was found to be greater than 0.05 which was the set level of significance. The affirmed hypothesis would thus be:

H<sub>02</sub> There is no significant effect of talent attraction practices on organizational commitment in county public service in Nyanza region, Kenya.

### **DISCUSSION**

The fact that a majority of respondents disagreed to all the talent attraction statements showed that talent attraction practices in county public service may not have enhanced commitment. It is therefore important for employers, including county public service to proactively build talent pools of suitable candidates for it provides prospective quality hires, as well as lowering sourcing costs for organizations. Resourcing the best candidates from a bigger talent pool rather than the available applicants would result in a more efficient talent acquisition. Weiner (2010) observed that when employees are employed in alignment with the organizational mission, then the process of employee engagement and commitment becomes easier. To enhance commitment through talent attraction practices, Parks and Floyd, (1996) noted that organizations should demonstrate reciprocity by providing employees with opportunities for personal development for internal candidates and for external candidates, organizations should ensure that recruiting messages highlight attractive job features, organizational values and commitment reciprocity. Weiner, (2010) further observed that commitment-oriented recruitment is strongly related to the expressive communications and appeals to values and beliefs and in the similar manner commitment-oriented selection have a focus on assessment of values and beliefs, and also on the degree of their congruency with organizational values.

The current research findings contradict previous studies that have established a significant effect of talent attraction on organizational commitment. Nobarieidishe, et al. (2014) in their study found a significant relationship between attracting the talents and the employee's organizational commitment in international division of Tejarat Bank in Iran. Halvaei and Ejlali (2015) also established that talent absorption had a significant effect on organizational commitment ( $\beta=.39$ ,  $p=.01$ ). This difference in findings could be as a result of the county government system in Kenya being at a young stage. The fact that it has been in existence for only five years could mean that they are still building effective talent attraction strategies and policies that can be able to enhance the organizational commitment of county public service employees. Also, the differences in study setting as well as different conceptualization of the independent variable could explain the differences in the research findings.

### 5.3 Conclusions

The aim of the study was to investigate the effect of talent attraction practices on organizational commitment. Public service employees in the six counties in Nyanza were the target population of the study. Pearson product moment correlation results showed that there existed a positive and significant relationship between talent attraction practices and organizational commitment. However, regression results indicated that talent attraction did not have a significant effect on organizational commitment. The study therefore concluded that:

Talent attraction practices have an important role to play in building organizational commitment. Consequently, the public service being essential for the effective operation of governments needs to attract and recruit the right kind of new talent to ensure capacity in the long term. The study results thus provide stronger evidence that talent attraction practices should be well managed because employees would reciprocate in the form of higher commitment. County public service can hence be an employer of choice by creating a work environment that ensures and contributes for talent attraction.

### 5.4 Recommendations

The study recommends that;

The HRM policies and processes in county public service should emphasize the importance of talent attraction practices and that the success of any organization depends on the quality of its human resource. It is therefore important that county governments attract the right talent to enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

### 5.5 Areas for Further research

Future studies could explore the relationship between demographic factors (age, gender, education, tenure) and organizational commitment in county public service in Kenya. Longitudinal studies are needed in order to explore any changes in the talent attraction practices and organizational commitment in Kenyan county public service.

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