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**ANTECEDENTS OF TALENT RETENTION AND ORGANIZATION PERFORMANCE OF NAIROBI CITY COUNTY
GOVERNMENT, KENYA**

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ANTECEDENTS OF TALENT RETENTION AND ORGANIZATION PERFORMANCE OF NAIROBI CITY COUNTY GOVERNMENT, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study established the effect of talent retention on organizational performance of Nairobi City County Government. The study was majorly anchored on the resource-based view theory that holds that organizational performance and competitive advantage results due to superior capabilities and resources compared to those of competitors. Social exchange theory also anchored this study. This research study adopted a descriptive approach through a cross-sectional research design. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting Nairobi City County Government where a census of only the top and middle level managers of Nairobi city county government were selected for the study as they were deemed appropriate to take part in the study. 121 managers within the county government formed the study's target population. They included the chief officers, directors, deputy directors and assistant directors only. Collection of primary data was done through questionnaire which was pilot tested at the county government of Wajir. The instrument was found suitable to collect the required data for the study. Descriptive statistics like percentages, means and standard deviation were used to analyze quantitative data. A multiple regression model was used to assess the influence of the dependent variable on the dependent variable. Hypothesis testing was done where the criteria of making decision was the p-value of respective beta coefficients at 95% confidence level. The null hypothesis was rejected when $p < 0.05$. Results from the analysis were presented by the use of figures and tables. The study results found out that talent retention positively and significantly affect organizational performance of Nairobi City County Government. The study recommended that organizational management should apply appropriate strategies to retain the right talents for Nairobi City County Government.

Key words; Talent Retention, Organizational Performance, Innovative Capabilities, Organizational Support

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INTRODUCTION

Talent retention has attracted keen attention in organizations, employers come up with strategies towards retaining the best talents while at the same time provide a work life balance in order to create a mutual benefit between the individual employee and the organization as a whole (Chepkoech, Bula, 2021). Work environment is determined by organization culture which in turn influences talent management (Bula & Kireru, 2017).

Geographically small countries have greatly proposed devolution of power as economically unfeasible, discordant and unrealistic. However, it has been successfully effected in Asian, European and African countries, irrespective of their size, with marvelous economic and progressive dividends (Nkomo, 2019). Devolution, as a system of governance, depicts decentralization of authority and thus, its definition is inevitable for the purpose of differentiating it from other systems of governance. The underlying principle of devolution of power to several government levels is primarily to grant citizens an opportunity to take part in making decisions via structures of governance, to ensure accessibility of services to the people, to foster a close relationship between the government and the people, to increase accountability, transparency and equitable sharing of resources as well as efficient and effective collection of revenue. Devolution is a critical element as it strives to ensure accountability at the sub-national/local levels, boosts advancement of national principles and values which brings about efficient public service delivery to the citizens (White, 2011). This shows that devolution is likely to improve service delivery.

In pursuit of enhancing performance of devolved units, as organizations, it is imperative to focus on the employees who work in those units. Studies have revealed that depending on the organization strategies and challenges encountered, the right talent is always needed to either execute a strategy or deal with a challenge (Gebelein, 2006). In pursuit of realizing sustainable success of an organization,

talent management is paramount (McDonnell *et al.*, 2011).

Kenya's devolved units are known as county governments. The present study focuses on performance of Nairobi city county government in Kenya. Organizational performance is viewed as the definite output of result as measured against the organizations' intended output (Hill & Jones, 2015). Greenwald (2008) describes an organization to be a combination of people who operate within a well-defined system of instructions, tasks, processes and interactions intended to accomplish distinguishable objectives. Each of the 47 county governments of Kenya are taken as organizations as each is formed by a combination of people who operate within a definite system of instructions as mandated by the constitution.

Research Problem

It is unacceptable that a county government as well endowed with resources, infrastructure, opportunities and accessibility to the best talents and latest innovations as Nairobi would perform poorer than other counties who have numerous challenges in terms of acquiring the very basic resources their performance may be so much dependent on (CIDP 2019). The NCCG is mandated to manage the high population growth, solve land inadequacy issues, curb insecurity, provide efficient transport system, conduct solid waste management, supply clean water and enhance proper sanitation. These functions are as enumerated in their order of preferences (CADP 2019). The major concern focus on financial performance is revenue collection and absorption rate. The county government sources revenue from local collection and equitable share from the central government. The performance in terms of percentage of local revenue collection against the target collection has been 86.9%, 76.59% and 55.77% for the FY 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 respectively portraying an uncertain and unstable performance in the last few years (Budget office NCCG 2018). From 2014 to 2017, the County usage of the budget stood at 78.22%, and 82.33% in

2015/16 Financial Year while 2016/17 had a low of 68.8% (CIDP 2018).

A HR perspective has been recommended on dealing with the poor performance reports (COB 2017). This study used purposive sampling of the top and middle level managers of NCCG to investigate the impact of talent retention on organization performance.

Research Objective

The general objective of this study was to analyze the effect of talent retention on organizational performance of Nairobi city county government, Kenya.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Talent retention has no significant effect on organizational performance of Nairobi city county government, Kenya.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Review

The study was guided by the resource based view (RBV) theory as well as the social exchange (SET) theory.

Resource-Based View Theory (RBVT)

Edith Penrose is credited to have proposed this theory 1959. It postulates that sustainable competitive advantage and performance results from the resources that are inimitable, unsubstitutable, tactic in nature and synergetic. The theory contends that this competitive advantage would cease to exist if the competitors could replicate the resource that gives the organization a competitive edge but this can only be possible if the organization lacks a certain superiority. According to Clulow, Gerstman and Barry (2003) having superior and adequate resources is a vital element needed to make organizations with competitive advantage over their competitors. The resources may be human or material resources (Passemard 2002). Resource based theorists consider human capital to underscore the kind of competitive advantage for organizations (Peppard & Rylander, 2001). Resource Based View Theory anchors this

study in that an organization's performance is derived from its ability to acquire, assemble, exploit, and nurture a combination of resources, both tangible and intangible. These resources may be represented by talented employees and how long they are retained to augment organizational performance. If well managed, not only does performance increase but also the magnitude of resources. As Teece (2009) observes, increase in quality resources in an organization is in tandem with improved services.

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The origin of social exchange theory is attributed to Thibaut and Kelly (1959). This theory implies that social conduct emanates from an exchange process (Wilkinson, Bacon, Redman & Snell, 2009). The theory postulates that people are more likely to exchange with others when they are convinced that they will affordably obtain value. Organizations may invest in practices that would evoke a desire in employees to reciprocate by contributing to attainment of the organization's objectives. According to Sparrow, Shipton, Budhwar and Brown (2016), certain HRM systems and practices such as training may impact performance through employee commitment and engagement. Blau (1964) assumed the SET perspective by arguing that an organization that treats employees fairly and make them feel valued creates reciprocity such that employees go out of their way to adopt beneficial to practices to the organization. Talent retention strategies such as employee incentives, benefits and condusive working environment may enable talented employees to feel obliged to work towards efficient realization of organizational goals. The principal of reciprocity as stressed through the social exchange theory can elicit resentment in relationships. In agreement with this, Drafke and Kossen (2002) observe that employees match the efforts they dedicate to their work and the rewards they get from it. If they feel that the reward they receive for the work done is not commensurate to what they put in, inequity and unfairness is

perceived and this can lead to demoralization and later turnover.

Review of Study Variables

Talent Retention and Organizational Performance

Ibudunni, Osibanjo, Adeniji, Salou and Falola (2016) studied how talent retention affects Nigerian banks' organizational performance through a descriptive research. Using questionnaires, data was collected from a sample of 185 respondents using Yari's formula. The study revealed that pay had a positive significant implication on employees' commitment and performance through regression analysis. However, this study was done in South West Nigeria, a different scenario from Nairobi City County, so the study findings may be applicable to other organizations in the banking industry but not in the county government. This study aimed at filling the contextual gap by examining the impact of talent retention on performance of NCCG. It also filled the methodological gap where a census sampling technique was employed to include all the

top and middle level managers of NCCG in the study as opposed to use of use of Yari's formula technique of determining sample size.

Lyria (2016) undertook a study to determine how talent retention affects performance of companies in Kenya. A mixed research approach was used to sample 224 respondents from a target population of 534 top managers. Results revealed that talent retention positively and strongly influence listed companies' performance. The working environment of organizations listed in NSE is different from that of county governments. The study findings might not be applied in the county governments set up as the policies governing employees are different. Also, a similar study has not been done before in this particular context. The current study sought to fill the contextual gap through exploring the talent retention's impact on performance of NCCG. It also filled a methodological gap as it used a census method to include all the top and middle level managers in the study.

Conceptual Framework

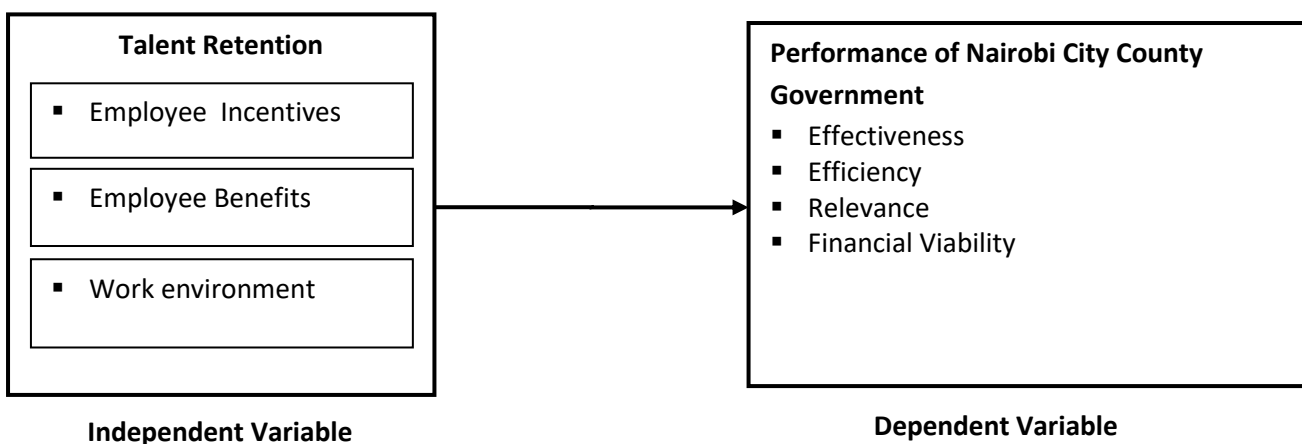


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
(Author 2021)

METHODOLOGY

To achieve optimal results, this study applied explanatory and descriptive research designs as it sought to systematically manipulate theoretically relevant variables and examine the outcome

variables. It was cross-sectional in nature as it involved observation of a group of people at one specific point in time. The study applied a quantitative case study as it sought to adopt a quantitative paradigm. The population of the study

comprised of the top and middle level managers of Nairobi City County Government. The managers were involved in the study as they were deemed appropriate due to engagements in the county government's mandates and strategies as well as the performance measures of the county government. Nairobi City county government, by the time of the study, had a total of 21 chief officers, 25 directors 30 deputy directors and 45 assistant directors who participated in the study as top and middle level managers respectively (CASB, 2019). Collection of primary data was done through structured questionnaires as a data collection instrument which was ideal because it is common to most people. Besides the ease associated with analyzing data collected through a structured questionnaire, it also has the benefit of minimizing researcher biases by eliminating the impact that the researcher's opinion can have on the respondents. The structured questionnaire enabled a standardized way of gathering responses as well as enhanced the easy analysis of data that was collected. It was also selected since the target population was literate.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Processing of data applied a step by step approach through a number of stages. Collected data was edited through a scrutiny of collected raw data to detect any errors or omissions. The questionnaires had information classified into specific concepts which reduced the collected data into homogeneous groups and arranged into logical

order and displayed in compact form. Data coding was carried out by assigning symbols and figures in order to limit the number of categories of the responses. For ease of presentation and facilitation of reliable description, percentages were used to present data into to a range of 0-100. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data in terms of percentages, standard deviation and mean. Presentation of the results was then done by the use of charts and tables. On the other hand, techniques of content analysis were employed to analyze inferential statistics whose findings were reported in narrative form. The researcher applied multiple linear regression analysis to test the study hypothesis.

Descriptive Statistics

The respondents were required by the main objective to express the level of their agreement with some statements concerning the interaction between talent retention and performance of NCCG in a 1- 5 likert scale. The specific areas included how the county government apply incentives and employee benefits to ensure the satisfaction of their employees as well as whether a favourable working environment has been put in place strategically to retain their talented workforce. Table 1 presents analysis of the responses; The responses on talent retention had an aggregate mean score of 3.3267 indicating a disagreement from respondents in regards to talent retention. The 0.9701 standard deviation indicates that the responses were normally distributed.

Table 1: Talent Retention and Organizational Performance of NCCG

	N	Not sure	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
The county gives incentives based on employees individual performance	101	9	29	44	17	2	2.7426	0.91273
The county gives group incentives	101	10	32	43	14	2	2.6634	0.90859
The county has managerial incentives	101	17	22	40	19	3	2.6931	1.05587
The county grants employee health insurance benefits	101	3	6	7	57	28	3.9901	0.96431
The county provide employees with fringe benefits such as parking spaces	101	3	8	34	41	15	3.5644	0.94251
The county has a pension scheme in place	101	2	2	13	48	36	4.1287	0.85631
The county has ensured a safe and comfortable work environment for all employees	101	5	8	43	31	14	3.4059	0.99175
The county has ensured a spacious work environment for all employees	101	6	11	23	45	16	3.5347	1.07298
The county provides adequate equipment and furniture for employees' comfort	101	7	14	39	32	9	3.2178	1.02571
Aggregate Score							3.3267	0.970084

Source: Survey data (2021)

The respondents strongly disagreed on the statements regarding incentives based on performance. When asked if the county government gives incentives based on employee performance, the respondents strongly disagreed (mean = 2.7426, SD = 0.91273). The responses on existence of group incentive had a mean of 2.6634 and standard deviation of 0.90859, thus they strongly disagreed. This could imply lack of incentives at the county governance which is contrary to an opinion by Ibudunni, *et al* (2015) that pay has a positive significant implication on employees' commitment and performance.

The respondents were in agreement that the county grants health insurance benefits to the employees (mean =3.9901, SD = 0.96431). Also the respondents agreed on the existence of pension scheme in the county, the mean score was 4.1287 and standard deviation of 0.85631 showed normal variations. Health insurance benefits and pension scheme should be upheld as they go a long way in maintaining employees in an organization in agreement with Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2012) who revealed a positive relationship between talent retention and organizational success.

The results are supported by the Social Exchange Theory (SET) which postulates that people are more inclined to engage in exchange with others when they believe that they will get benefits without acquiring unbearable expenses. The theory challenges organizations to invest in practices that would evoke a desire in employees to reciprocate by contributing to attainment of organizational objectives.

Coefficient of Determination

To assess the research model, talent retention was then subjected to linear regression analysis in order to measure the success of the model and predict causal relationship between independent variables (employee incentives, employee benefits and employee working environment), and the dependent variable (organizational performance).

Table 2: Coefficient of Determination

Model 1	Coefficients ^a				
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
(Constant)	.124	.214	.578	.564	
Talent Retention	.228	.072	3.176	.002	

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Talent Retention.

Source: Survey data (2021)

The model explains 24.6% of the variance on organizational performance. Clearly, there are factors which can be used to predict organizational performance. However, this is still a good model as Cooper and Schinder, (2013) pointed out that as much as lower value R square 0.10-0.20 is acceptable in social science research. This means that 24.6% of the relationship is explained by the

identified three factors namely employee incentives, employee benefits and employee working environment.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The study used ANOVA to establish the significance of the regression model. In testing the significance level, the statistical significance was considered significant if the p-value was less or equal to 0.05.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model 1	ANOVA ^a				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	25.613	3	8.538	66.395	.000 ^b
Residual	12.473	97	.129		
Total	38.086	100			

The significance of the regression model is as per table 3.2 shows a P-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant in predicting organizational performance. Basing the confidence level at 95% the analysis indicates high reliability of the results obtained. The overall Anova results indicate that the model was significant at F = 66.395, p = 0.000.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's objective determined the effects of talent retention on NCCG organizational performance. The null hypothesis for this objective was that talent retention has no significant effect on NCCG's organizational performance. The result of the study showed that talent retention has a significant positive effect on performance of NCCG. The conclusion on the findings reported from this hypothesis was explained using several bases

namely, the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the descriptive statistics of the variable, previous researches and the social exchange theory

From the demographic characteristics of the respondents, it was observed that the respondents had a longer service in the city county government of Nairobi. This means that they, in one way or the other, had a reason that kept them working for the county government for over five years. It means that each one of them had an aspect of the county government that kept them working, year in and year out. This stand is supported by the observation that over 85% of the respondents had more than five years work experience in NCCG. This may be construed to mean that the respondents, who were purposively chosen as managerial staff, were well placed to develop employee retention strategies that would ensure that the best talents are retained in NCCG for a longer time.

Theoretically, the results were consistent with the social exchange theory postulates that indicate that people are more likely to exchange with others when they are convinced that they will affordably obtain value. An organization will eventually evoke a desire by employees to reciprocate how they handle them by contributing towards attainment of organizational goals. The postulates of this theory seem to be applied in NCCG as employees perform to the extent to which they feel valued by their employer.

The descriptive statistics showed that though the county government had some benefits that motivated employees to work for the organization for a longer time, the county government did not have incentives that were viewed as motivational to the employees. Pension and health insurance benefits were singled out as benefits that were fair to all employees working in the county government. However, incentives, conducive work environment as well as requirements such as tools and equipments were not satisfactory to the employees and above all, they did not strategically focus on organizational performance. Managers should

engage an inquiry into the main motivators of employees working in the county government to enhance retention and curb turnover. The study findings are consistent with the empirical literature review in this study which indicates that talent retention has a significant impact on the organizational performance of a firm. It should be noted that whilst employee benefits may attract talented employees to an organization, they cannot retain them as with time, employees feel they are more of an entitlement than benefits. The fringe benefits should be those that employees view as rewards as opposed to those they view as their rights. In such a case, it would be important to have an array of benefits and have employees choose among them what they may prefer to make them more rewarding. The reward system should not only be internally fair and externally competitive but must be performance based. This will ensure that those who perform better are more rewarded and serve for a longer period in organizations. Long service of exemplary performers also enhances training of new employees as well as raises performance standards to the incoming employees and eventually, organizational success becomes sustainable.

The reported findings raised a number of implications on the theory and practice of Human Resource Management. The incentives that organizations put across for their employees serve to motivate different employees differently. In this light, it would be advisable to carry out a reward survey so as to have incentives that will serve to motivate talented employees to serve longer in an organization and should as well be performance based to enable employees to focus on organizational performance. The incentives and benefits should be progressive in order to encourage employees to be more efficient and innovative in their day to day work engagements. The study findings also implied that employees value a work environment where they feel safe, comfortable and well taken care of in terms of amenities. Organizations should strive to ensure

that the working environment is conducive for the number of employees working at any particular moment.

The hypothesis/ objective also contributed to knowledge in human resource management in a number of aspects. First was by filling the identified gap of the effect of talent retention on the organizational performance of NCCG. Towards this objective, the hypothesis addressed the gap by indicating that talent retention has a positive significant effect on the organizational performance of NCCG. Further, the study builds on the empirical evidence that enhances generalizability of study findings on the effect of talent retention on organizational performance. Previous studies had been carried out in the financial sector as well as private entities, but none had been done in a county government in Kenya.

Recommendations

The study objective sought to determine the effect of talent retention on the organizational performance of NCCG, results of the descriptive statistics indicated that majority of the respondents disagreed about the suitability of talent retention strategies in NCCG. This was construed to mean that, some of the talent retention initiatives put across by the management of the county government were not viewed by the employees as incentives for motivation but as employees' rights, such as pension scheme and health insurance benefits, hence were not motivational as they had been purposed. The incentives formulated by the county government of Nairobi were not based on individual or group performance. A comfortable working environment, that is safe, spacious and with adequate tools and equipments and furniture seems to be inadequate in NCCG. The inferential statistics further showed that talent retention had a positive significant influence on organizational performance of NCCG leading to a conclusion that NCCG should consider a reward structure that is performance based and must also ensure a safe and spacious working environment to enhance the

comfort of talented employees so as to allow a better performance and a longer service in NCCG.

Contributions of the Study to the Body of Knowledge

This study determined the effect of talent retention on NCCG performance. The study made contribution to the area of knowledge in the area of talent management and organizational performance in several ways. First, most prior studies only focused on the direct relationship between the dependent and independent objectives, i.e. between organizational performance and talent retention. The study complements the existing knowledge by demonstrating a partial mediating effect of innovative capabilities on the relationship between talent management and organizational performance. It has also showed the moderating effect of organizational support in the relationship between talent management and organizational performance. This study provides empirical evidence on the application of talent retention strategies on employees working in a county government in order to realize sustainable exemplary performance.

The study supports the propositions of the Resource Based View theory in that the performance of an organization is largely dependent on the resources of that organization. In this case, talented employees of an organization are not just a valuable resource but a source of competitive advantage. These study findings also support the postulates of the Social Exchange Theory that people are more likely to exchange with others when they are convinced that they will affordably obtain value. In this case, when talented employees feel valued and supported by the organization, they give in their best towards realization of organizational objectives.

Empirical literature indicated that studies done on talent retention and organizational performance have been carried out in private and public entities in the financial sector, insurance sector non-governmental organizations and multinational companies across the world. The studies that have

linked retention of talent and organizational performance have mostly been in the context of the banking sector in Kenya and other parts of the world. This study provides substantial proof supporting the application of talent retention in the Kenyan context, more so in a devolved government structure. It has brought to a sharp focus that county governments are organizations as they have a set of pre-determined objectives to achieve, just like the other conventional organizations. The results are however unique and specific to NCCG.

In terms of measuring organizational performance, most studies that link talent management and organizational performance adopt the use of either financial or non-financial measures or a majority preferring to adopt financial measures. Use of a single measure is insufficiency to give a holistic perusal of performance aspects in a specified context. This study makes a contribution to knowledge by incorporating both financial and non financial measures to enable a holistic measure of the NCCG performance. Finally, the findings of this study are very significant to the management of the NCCG when it comes to formulation and implementation of performance based policies especially on the retention of human resources.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

This study made three recommendations based on the reported findings of the study. First, the study provided an elaborate understanding of the plight

of county governments as highlighted by the situation of NCCG. The Ministry of devolution will be well guided when formulating performance standards and expectations depending with the county government. It will also be clear to the council of governors that the county governments should be run as distinct organizations with effective strategies in place to yield to sustainable performance.

The study recommended policy makers to develop ways of improving performance of county governments by enhancing talent retention strategies and practices.

The county governments should have employee retention policies not only to sustain impressive performance but also enhance passing knowledge from older employees to newer employees. Specific types of rewards should be put in place for the best performers who give longer services to the city county government. County government should have policies that identify and position supervisors who have the necessary knowledge and skills that to support employees towards exemplary performance. The support should be in form of knowledge, guidance, information or provision of appropriate resources to enable employees to work optimally towards realization of both their individual and group goals. This is what leads to efficiency and effectiveness of organization performance.

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