

Influence of Human Resource Management Practices on Employee Retention in Kenya Health Institutions: A Case Study of Nyeri County Referral Hospital

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Abstract: *Globalization, technological advancement and social-economic progress has made today's world different. As such organizations need to create a competitive edge in order to survive the global economy. In considering the above the employees should be considered as the most valuable asset in an organization for the knowledge, experience and skills that they possess and hence need for their retention. The general purpose of this study was to establish the influence of HRM practices on employees' retention in Kenya Health Institutions. The specific objectives of the study were to establish whether career development and work-life balance influence retention of medical staff in Nyeri County Referral Hospital. The study adopted case study design. The total population of the study was 121 medical staff in the hospital and a sample of 35 respondents which translates to 30% of the target population was used, using stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected using questionnaires which had both closed ended question and open ended questions. Data analysis was conducted using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 18 to generate descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies and percentages were generated from the data and presented using tables, pie charts and bar charts while ordinal logistic regression analysis was done to establish relationship of each parameter of the independent variables in the study. Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was also done to establish the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. The study achieved a response rate of 100%. The results indicated that medical staffs are not currently satisfied with career development and work-life balance in Nyeri County Referral Hospital. Career development and work-life balance were found to have positive but insignificant effect on staff retention in the hospital. In addition, majority of the respondents indicated that both career development and Work-Life Balance influences medical staff retention in Nyeri County Referral Hospital. Therefore on addressing career development the study recommends that county government of Nyeri and in particular Nyeri County Referral Hospital should revise their training and development policies to ensure fairness and accountability in their implementation. It is also recommended that management in health institutions and in particular Nyeri County Referral Hospital should recognize professional growth and career development and grant employees study leave and also provide them with financial support for further studies. Furthermore the study recommends that, when dealing with Work-life balance health institutions should consider work-life balance while engaging medical staff in unusual working hours as the research has proven that Work-life balance had a positive influence on medical staff retention.*

Keywords: Human Resource Management Practices, career development support, work-life balance practices, Employees Retention, Nyeri County Referral Hospital.

1. Background of the Study

Human resources have been said to play an important role in an organization's performance (Barney & Wright, 1997). This is because they have the knowledge, experience and skills that are used to create competitive advantage for an organization. A high turnover rate leads to the inability of an organization to provide quality care and job satisfaction to employees (Marquis & Huston, 2003). At the organizational level, turnover inflicts numerous costs. Departing employees often take with them valuable knowledge and expertise gained through experience. In addition to these indirect or less quantifiable costs, organizations face many costs directly related to turnover, including exit interview time and administrative requirements, payout of unused vacation time, and the cost of temporary workers or overtime for coworkers asked to fill in (Reichheld, 1993). A research by Hill (2011); Holtom and O'Neill (2004) showed that medical professionals have a strong tendency to leave the organizations for which they work and the country where they live (Bezuidenhout, Joubert, Hiemstra, & Struwig, 2009; Rasool, Botha, & Bisschoff, 2012; Statistics South Africa, 2005). Professionals such as these are regarded as

'intellectual capital' and are necessary in the knowledge economy; therefore, understanding and managing their turnover can have significant consequences for the organization's competitive advantage (Niederman, Sumner, & Maertz, 2007; Powell & Snellman, 2004).

2. Statement of the Problem

One of the major challenges facing health systems in sub-Saharan Africa is the international migration of health staff (Mafana et al., 2009). Staff retention is a key human resource function which without it, the organizational performance diminishes. The increasing movement of staff has thus become a problem which is worth consideration because turnover effects can have direct and indirect costs and loss of capital, which may impact on the organizational success (Dess & Shaw, 2001). Such costs include repetitive recruitment, selection and training of new employees and also product or service quality problems. Thus, the challenge of retaining such critical employees causes poor service delivery in our hospitals and even medical students enrolled in such areas may lack guidance in their studies, which in turn incapacitates building of future intellectual capacity

(Oni, 2000). Kenya hospitals are no exception. Medical staffs are moving from one hospital to another, from one county hospital to another and some are even moving out to work in other countries. According to Ministry of Health, Staffing Trends 2005-2009 indicated that the rate of medical officers recruited were 1,678, clinical officers, 845, enrolled nurse 2,406, nursing officer 1101 and medical lab technologist/technicians stood at 381 while the number that exited during the same period stood at doctors 972, clinical officers 356 enrolled nurse 1,964, nursing officer 461 medical lab technologists were 185. Awuor (2014) conducted a study on retention of rural health workers and recommended a similar study be undertaken in a different context. This is also echoed by Kiragu (2011) who recommended investigation on effective compensation practices, career growth and promotion/recognition to ensure that employees are retained for a long time. In pursuit of the above concern, this study aimed at investigating influence of the human resource management practices on employees' retention in Nyeri County Referral Hospital.

3. Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of human resource management practices on employees' retention in Kenya health institutions using Nyeri County Referral Hospital as a case. Specifically the study sought to establish the influence of career development and work-life balance on employee retention in Nyeri County Referral Hospital.

4. Literature Review

The term literature refers to the works the researcher consulted in order to understand and investigate the research problem. A literature review therefore is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). Therefore the study presents a review of literature based on the research topic and the study objectives. It contains the conceptual framework which looked at the relationship between human resource management practices and employees retention in Kenya Health Institutions. The study postulates that employees retention (dependent variable) is a function of two main determinants namely, career development and work-life balance (independent variables) as indicated in Figure 1 below.

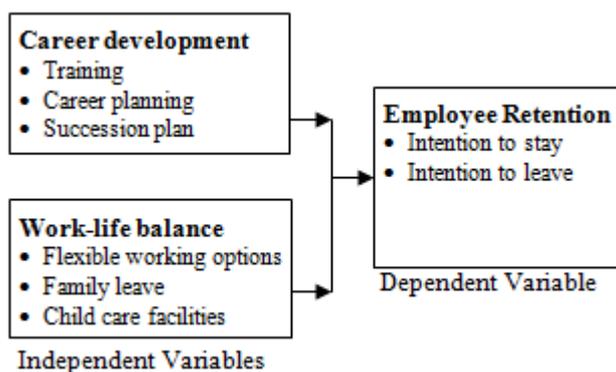


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4.1 Career development

Career development is a dynamic concept that covers the formal development of an employee within an organization by providing long term strategy. It is a growing concern for undertaking need analysis in terms of (career growth and awareness) coaching, training and mentorship for leadership (Kelly, 2012). Effective career development determines the quality of work force and success of organizations (O'Donnell, 2007). The long term implication on employees will be job satisfaction, succession and higher retention (Grawitch, Gottschalk, & Munz, 2006). Growth and development are the integral part of every individual's career. If employees cannot foresee their path of career development in their current organization, there are chances that they will leave the organization as soon as they get an opportunity (Bratton & Gold, 2003). Investing in training programmes can impact on employee's feeling of self-worth within the organization. Employees are more likely to remain in an organization which they feel has an interest in them and their developing career (Young & Cates, 2005). Huselid (1995) suggested that progressive human resource practices that embrace career-related practices could improve knowledge, skills and the abilities of an organization's current and potential employees, and enhance the retention of quality employees.

As long as employees feel that they are learning and growing, they will be less inclined to leave. On the other hand, once employees feel they are no longer growing, they begin to look externally for new job opportunities (Rodriguez, 2008). This makes development and learning critical for attracting and retaining employees, because talented people are inclined to leave if they feel they are not growing and stretching (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001).

4.2 Work-life balance

Work-life balance refers to perceiving a satisfactory balance between one's personal life and work schedule, and minimal conflict between the multiple roles one has to fulfill in terms of one's personal and work lives (Dockel, 2003).

In addition, Munsamy and Bosch-Venter (2009) state that the focus of work-life balance is on the notion of a flexible and stress-free work environment by making provision for childcare facilities and access to families. Increasing flexibility around work has therefore become more important to dual-income families. As a result, organizations may be perceived as concerned employers, which positively influence employees and a positive attitude towards the organization (Dockel, 2003).

Increased workloads may also be a result of working overtime, or even remaining on standby after normal working hours (Zurn, Dolea, & Stilwell, 2005). In most cases, this is by choice, to earn extra money. However, as the increased burden of extra work is experienced by health care workers in their primary jobs, many are too tired and too stressed to continue working during their off days. This means more work with ultimately less income (Schroeder, 2006).

Health care workers may also find themselves in jobs where they are compelled to work extra hours or shifts. Often, these employees find themselves in situations where they are not adequately remunerated for the extra work, but fail to object because of fear of subordination, reprisals or even job losses (Artazcoz et al., 2009). In many of these cases, the increased workloads often lead to employees burning out, becoming dispassionate and ultimately look towards migrating, either cross industry or internationally. A research done in Turkey shows that nurses were keen to quit because of inappropriate working hours (Yildiz, Ayhan, & Erdogmus, 2009).

4.3 Retention of employees

Previous research has identified several factors relating to employee retention, situated on both organizational and employee levels (Birt, Wallis, & Winternitz, 2004). Finally, Hytter (2007) demonstrated that workplace factors such as rewards, leadership style, career opportunities, training and development of skills, physical working conditions, and work-life balance, have an indirect influence on retention. The high cost that comes with turnover has highlighted the need for organizations to make retention of staff their number one priority. This is not the case in medical field only but also applies to other careers and industries where shortage of staff is experienced.

5. Research Methodology

A case study research design was used in the study. The target population for this study was 121 medical staff in Nyeri County Referral Hospital. A sample of 35 respondents which translates to 30% was drawn from the target population. The study employed stratified random sampling technique. The questionnaires were used to obtain the relevant data aimed at answering the research questions. Data gathered from closed ended questions was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to present descriptive statistics. While inferential statistics was presented using pearson correlation analysis to establish the relationship between career development and work-life balance on employee retention at 95% confidence level. The results were presented using tables, pie charts and bar charts while ordinal logistic regression analysis was done to establish relationship of each parameter of the independent variables in the study. Qualitative data gathered from open ended questions was also coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

6. Analysis and Findings

6.1 Career Development

The findings on whether medical staff are currently satisfied with the Career Development in the hospital, indicate that most of the respondents, 74.3% were not satisfied with the career development in Nyeri County Referral Hospital.

The study sought to establish the perception of the respondents on whether career development support influences medical Staff Retention in Nyeri County Referral

Hospital. From the results, majority of the respondents, 62.9% said that career development influences medical Staff Retention.

The study sought to establish the extent to which key components of career development affect staff retention in health institutions. As shown in Table 1, training and development policy being in place had the highest with a (mean = 3.51) followed by study leaves being granted for career development with a (mean = 3.23), opportunities for career advancements had a (mean = 1.23), well detailed training and development policy content had a (mean = 2.77), management recognition of professional growth and career development had a (mean = 1.66) while provision of financial support for further studies had a (mean = 2.89). The results of the finding indicated that training and development policy being in place, and study leaves being granted for those willing to further their studies had the highest rating. This revealed employee would prefer working in institutions where there are well laid down structures in terms of policy and procedures. The finding asserts earlier study by Bratton & Gold (2003), who pointed out that growth and development are the integral part of every individual's career and if employees cannot foresee their path of career development in their current organization, there are chances that they will leave the organization as soon as they get an opportunity.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics showing components of career development

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|--------|----------------|----|
| Opportunities for career advancement | 1.2286 | .49024 | 35 |
| Training and development policy in place | 3.5143 | 1.37993 | 35 |
| Well detailed training and development policy content. | 2.7714 | 1.43662 | 35 |
| Management recognition of professional growth and career development. | 1.6571 | 1.13611 | 35 |
| Provision of financial support for furthering studies. | 2.8857 | 1.15737 | 35 |
| Study leaves granted to those who are willing | 3.2286 | 1.45695 | 35 |

6.2 Work-Life Balance

The study sought to establish whether medical staff are currently satisfied with work-life balance practices on medical staff in the hospital. The findings, indicate that most of the respondents, 54.3% were not satisfied with the Work-Life Balance practices in Nyeri County Referral Hospital.

The study sought to establish the perception of the respondents on whether Work-Life Balance practices influences medical Staff Retention. The findings showed that majority of the respondents, 57.1%, said that Work-Life Balance practices influences medical Staff Retention. The finding are consistent with earlier study by Artazcoz et al. (2009), who pointed out that the increased workloads often lead to employees burning out, becoming dispassionate and ultimately look towards migrating, either cross industry or internationally.

As shown in Table 2, reasonable number of working hours per day had the highest with a (mean = 3.60) followed by

ability to achieve the desired balance between work and family life with a (mean = 3.23), understandable number of patients attended to per day had a (mean = 2.89), permission to attend to personal responsibilities had a (mean = 1.66), flexible working hours had a (mean = 2.77), while provision of child care facilities at the hospital had a (mean = 1.23). The findings of the study, asserts earlier research done in Turkey by Yildiz et al. (2009), which shows that nurses were keen to quit because of inappropriate working hours.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics showing components of Work-Life Balance

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|--|--------|----------------|----|
| Ability to achieve the desired balance between work and family life. | 3.2286 | 1.45695 | 35 |
| Reasonable number of hours for working per day | 3.6000 | .84714 | 35 |
| Understandable number of patients attended to per day | 2.8857 | 1.15737 | 35 |
| Permission to attend to personal responsibilities. | 1.6571 | 1.13611 | 35 |
| Flexible working hours | 2.7714 | 1.43662 | 35 |
| Provision of child care facilities at the hospital. | 1.2286 | .49024 | 35 |

6.3 Ordinal logistic regression

In SPSS ordinal logistic regression is a statistical technique that is used to predict behavior of ordinal dependent variables with a set of independent variables. To test the relationship, ordinal logistic regression for the parameters considered under each objective was obtained and the results were interpreted according to the parameter estimates coefficient values at the 95% level of significance. Explanation and interpretation of the findings regarding the expected relationships between human resource management practices factors and staff retention was given.

Table 3: Parameter Estimates for career development factors

| | | Estimate | Std. Error | Wald | Df | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|-----------|------------------------|----------|------------|-------|----|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Threshold | [EmployeeRet = 2.00] | 2.041 | 1.786 | 1.306 | 1 | .253 | -1.459 | 5.541 |
| | [EmployeeRet = 3.00] | 3.449 | 1.819 | 3.596 | 1 | .058 | -.116 | 7.015 |
| | [EmployeeRet = 4.00] | 6.404 | 2.082 | 9.459 | 1 | .002 | 2.323 | 10.484 |
| Location | CareerAdvOpport | .973 | .776 | 1.570 | 1 | .210 | -.549 | 2.495 |
| | TrainingPolicyAvailed | .114 | .277 | .169 | 1 | .681 | -.428 | .656 |
| | DetailedTrainingPolicy | .250 | .259 | .938 | 1 | .333 | -.256 | .757 |
| | CareerGroRecognition | .390 | .335 | 1.354 | 1 | .245 | -.267 | 1.046 |
| | SponsoredTraining | .326 | .326 | .995 | 1 | .319 | -.314 | .965 |
| | StudyleaveGranted | .145 | .268 | .293 | 1 | .588 | -.380 | .670 |

Link function: Logit.

B) Work-Life Balance

Objective two of the study, sought to establish the influence of work-life balance on retention of employees in Nyeri County Referral Hospital. Work-Life Balance was measured in terms of ability to achieve the desired balance between work and family life, reasonable number of working hours per day, understandable number of patients attended to per day, permission to attend to personal responsibilities, flexible working hours and provision of child care facilities in the hospital. In testing influence of Work-Life Balance on staff retention it was deemed necessary to test the

a) Career Development

The first objective of the study sought to determine the influence of career development on employee retention in Nyeri County Referral Hospital. Career development was measured in terms of opportunities for career advancements, training and development policy being in place, well detailed training and development policy content, management recognition of professional growth and career development, provision of financial support for further studies and study leaves being granted for career development. In testing influence of career development on staff retention it was deemed necessary to test the relationship each factor of career development had on staff retention as this would help establish if different career development factors have the same or different effect on staff retention. Ordinal logistic regression analysis was done to show the relationship of each factor of career development on staff retention as shown in Table 3. From the parameter estimates in Table 3, at 95% confidence interval; opportunities for career advancements, training and development policy being in place, well detailed training and development policy content, management recognition of professional growth and career development, provision of financial support for further studies and study leaves being granted for career development were found to have positive but statistically insignificant effect on employee retention. The findings are similar to earlier findings by Young and Cates, (2005), who concluded that employees are more likely to remain in an organization which they feel has an interest in them and their developing career. Also a study carried out by Van, Coelzee, and Takawira (2013), established that lack of growth opportunity (perceived career advancement, training and development opportunities) had a negative influence on an individual's attitude towards the organization which in turn influences the intention to leave, leading to turnover behavior.

relationship each factor of Work-Life Balance had on staff retention as this would help establish if different career development factors have the same or different effect on staff retention. Ordinal logistic regression analysis was done to show the relationship of each factor of Work-Life Balance on staff retention as shown in Table 4. From the parameter estimates in Table 4, at 95% confidence interval; reasonable number of working hours per day was found to have positive and statistically significant effect on employee retention at estimate coefficient of 1.324 with an associated p-value of 0.005 < 0.05. Ability to achieve the desired balance between

work and family life, understandable number of patients attended to per day, permission to attend to personal responsibilities, flexible working hours and provision of child care facilities at the work place were found to have positive but statistically insignificant effect on employee retention at estimate coefficient of 0.236 with an associated p-value of 0.388 > 0.05, 0.332 with an associated p-value of 0.291 > 0.05 and 0.494 with an associated p-value of 0.149 > 0.05 respectively. The results of the findings that number of working hours per day had positive and significant influence on staff retention agree with earlier study by Yildiz et al. (2009), who found out that nurses were keen to quit because of inappropriate working hours hence

the management and the government should focus on mechanism to enhance these factors to increase the retention level. On the other hand, according to Schroeder (2006), in most cases working extra hours may be by choice to earn extra money. A study by Artazcoz et al. (2009), revealed that health care workers may also find themselves in jobs where they are compelled to work extra hours or shifts. They found out that these employees find themselves in situations where they are not adequately remunerated for the extra work, but fail to object because of fear of subordination, reprisals or even job losses.

Table 4: Parameter Estimates for work-life balance factors

| | | Estimate | Std. Error | Wald | df | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|-----------|----------------------|----------|------------|--------|----|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Threshold | [EmployeeRet = 2.00] | 6.374 | 2.436 | 6.850 | 1 | .009 | 1.601 | 11.148 |
| | [EmployeeRet = 3.00] | 8.173 | 2.613 | 9.786 | 1 | .002 | 3.052 | 13.294 |
| | [EmployeeRet = 4.00] | 11.521 | 2.968 | 15.073 | 1 | .000 | 5.705 | 17.337 |
| Location | WorkFamilyBalance | .236 | .273 | .747 | 1 | .388 | -.300 | .772 |
| | ReasonableWorkgHrs | 1.324 | .468 | 8.013 | 1 | .005 | .407 | 2.240 |
| | UnderstandablePat | .332 | .315 | 1.113 | 1 | .291 | -.285 | .949 |
| | WelfarePermission | .494 | .342 | 2.086 | 1 | .149 | -.176 | 1.165 |
| | FlexibleWorkingHrs | .281 | .267 | 1.104 | 1 | .293 | -.243 | .805 |
| | ChildCareFacility | .868 | .772 | 1.265 | 1 | .261 | -.645 | 2.381 |

Link function: Logit.

6.4 Correlation Analysis

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), correlation technique is used to analyze the degree of relationship between two variables. From the correlation matrix in Table 5, all the three independent variables had a positive relationship with the dependent variable. Career development was positively but insignificantly related to staff retention ($r = 0.063$, p value $0.721 > 0.05$). Work life balance was positively but insignificantly related to staff retention ($r = 0.173$, p value $0.320 > 0.05$). The findings are similar with earlier study by Ng'ethe, Iravo, and Namusonge (2012) who argued that retention of employees needs to be managed, and identified remuneration, development, career opportunity, work environment, performance management and work, family and flexible time as areas that have an effect on retention of employees. This is also echoed by Dockel (2003); Netswera, Rankhumise, and Mavundila (2005) as they put it that retention factors (such as compensation, job characteristics, training and development opportunities, supervisor support, career opportunities and work-life balance have been shown to facilitate employees' decisions to leave or stay.

Table 5: Correlation matrix

| | | Employee retention | Career development | Work life balance |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Employee retention | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | |
| | N | 35 | | |
| Career development | Pearson Correlation | .063 | 1 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .721 | | |
| | N | 35 | 35 | |
| Work life balance | Pearson Correlation | .173 | .130 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .320 | .458 | |
| | N | 35 | 35 | 35 |

7. Conclusion

The study concludes that current medical employees in Nyeri County Referral Hospital are not satisfied with the current career development and work-life balance factors used in the study. The study also revealed that current retention rate is very low though it can be increased if the factors under this study were enhanced. The correlation analysis results indicate that in medical institutions and particularly in Nyeri County Referral Hospital, the predictor variables (career development and work life balance) influence medical staff retention. All the factors considered in this study is necessary for optimal retention of medical staff in Nyeri County Referral Hospital. It was further evident that all the parameters used to measure the independent variables have a relationship with medical staff retention where majority had positive influence on staff retention. The study therefore concluded that organizations should develop retention strategies that will reduce the number of people leaving organizations since increasing movement of staff has become a problem which is worth consideration because turnover effects can have direct and indirect impact on the organizational success and service delivery.

8. Recommendations

Following the findings of this study, a number of recommendations can be made. To start with, based on the finding that career development had an influence on medical staff retention, this study suggests that health institutions and particularly Nyeri County Referral Hospital should revise their training and development policies to ensure fairness and accountability in their implementation. The study also recommended that management in Nyeri County Referral

Hospital should recognize professional growth and career development and grant employees study leave and also provide them with financial support for further studies.

Work-life balance had an influence on medical staff retention, the significant factors of work-life balance attributed employee retention was the number of working hours per day. Based on this finding, the study suggested that health institutions in Kenya and particularly Nyeri County Referral Hospital should consider work-life balance while engaging medical staff in unusual working hours.

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