

Factors Influencing Employee Commitment in Kenya's Public Health Sector: A Case Study of Thika Level 5 Hospital

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Abstract: *In the public health sector in Kenya many who have the ability tend to avoid the public hospitals and tend to go to the private hospitals with the medical staff many a time being accused of negligence or lack of empathy on the patients. It is therefore necessary to investigate the factors that affect the employees' commitment at the public health sector in Kenya because generating higher levels of commitment is a critical factor for successful operation of any organization. This study therefore targeted the hospital workers in the Kenya's public health sector and in particular Thika Level 5 Hospital. The objectives of the study were to establish how reward practices and employee participation, influence employee commitment in Thika Level 5 Hospital. The study adopted a case study research design. The target population for the study was 300 employees in Thika Level 5 Hospital comprising of 25 doctors, 20 clinical officers, 140 nurses and 115 administrative and support staff. The study sample covered 23% from both in-patient and out-patient division translating to a sample of 70 health workers at the hospital. The researcher employed stratified random sampling technique to select the samples for the study. The study used questionnaires to collect primary data from the respondents. The data collected was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (correlation and regression). Correlation and multiple regression analysis was undertaken to determine and explain the relationship between the variables. From the correlation results, it was established that there is a strong positive relationship between employee commitment and reward practices and employee participation which are also both statistically significant at level 0.01. From the findings of the regression results it was established that all the independent variables covered had positive influence on employee commitment. However, reward practices had the highest contributor of employee commitment in Thika Level 5 Hospital. The study recommends that the Kenyan public health sector and in particular Thika Level 5 Hospital should provide its employees with better and competitive rewards, clear promotion criteria and career progression as it will increase employee commitment since their individual and formal needs are well taken care of. The study further recommends that employees be involved in decision making as it will help the employees in social identification with the organization and accept changes that are imposed on them.*

Keywords: Employee Commitment, Reward Practices, Employee Participation, Kenya's Public Health Sector, Thika Level 5 Hospital.

1. Introduction

The term commitment in the shape of loyalty to and identification with the firm has been around for a long time as has the notion of organizational citizenship, which is behavior that benefits the organization but is not required as part of the job description and is therefore discretionary (Armstrong, 2009). Generating higher levels of employee commitment in any organization is a critical factor to their successful operation. Commitment is defined as an employee's identification with, and adoption of, an organization's values, norms and traditions. As such it is a product of an employee's sense of well-being and satisfaction with the organization (Ogba, 2008). Paille', Fournier, and Lamontagne (2011), found that on the one hand, a negative link between employee commitment and absenteeism, quitting, stress, work-family conflict and intention to leave the organization and, conversely, positive links between employee commitment and organizational citizenship behavior and work efficiency. A high level of employee commitment in an organization can have beneficial consequences, resulting in lower absenteeism, higher performance and lower employee turnover.

2. Statement of the Problem

Kenya with a population of approximately 40 million people has struggled to build a health system that can effectively deliver quality health services to its population. The Kenyan public health sector has been facing severe challenges for a long time. However these challenges appear to have escalated with the formation of the county governments and especially due to the devolved health care system which was widely unpopular with most health workers (KMPPDU, 2014).

According to Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union (2014), doctors and other medical practitioners have been resigning from the county hospitals at an alarming rate. In the recent past the country has probably experienced more doctor strikes than in any other period in its history. This situation therefore necessitates research in the public health sector in order to establish the factors that are affecting the employee commitment in the health sector in Kenya and in particular Thika Level 5 Hospital.

3. Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to establish the factors influencing employee commitment in the Kenyan public health sector using Thika Level 5 Hospital a case study. Specifically the study aimed to determine the influence of reward practices and employee participation on employee commitment in Thika level 5 hospital.

4. Literature Review

The chapter presents a review of literature based on the research topic and the study objectives. It contains theoretical framework and conceptual framework.

4.1 Theoretical Framework

A theory is a reasoned statement or groups of statements, which are supported by evidence, meant to explain phenomena. Theories provide indicators and examples of what is incorporated in the framework. A theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). This study was based on Equity theory and Human capital theory.

4.1.1 Equity Theory

According to the Adam's Equity Theory, how much people are willing to contribute to an organization depends on their assessment of fairness, or equity of the reward they receive in exchange. Employees in an organization will have the tendency to compare their pay with others if similar qualifications in other organizations. If they feel they are paid fairly, they will remain in the organization. However if they feel that they are under paid they may tend to seek opportunities elsewhere (Adams, 1963). Thus the organization should use a proper reward management as a way of retaining the best of their talents and hence enhance their performance. Likewise, promotion and advancement in an organization should be related to the attainment of the set objectives. This encourages the employees to work harder towards the objectives thus leading to better performance by the organization (Adams & Freedman, 1979).

4.1.2 Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory argues that workers with higher skill levels receive higher compensation because they are more productive. Employee involvement may require workers with more general skills to perform more complex tasks, which might result in more rigorous selection and hiring criteria and increase the demand for and wages of more educated workers. New practices may also require more firm-specific skills, which would increase employer-provided training and wages as well (Helper, Susan, David, Levine, & Bendoly, 2002).

4.2 Conceptual Framework

Mugenda (2008) defines conceptual framework as a concise description of the phenomenon under study accompanied by a graphical or visual depiction of the major variables of the study. In the study, the conceptual framework looked at the

relationship between the independent variables [reward practices and employee participation] and dependent variable [Employee Commitment] as shown in figure [1].

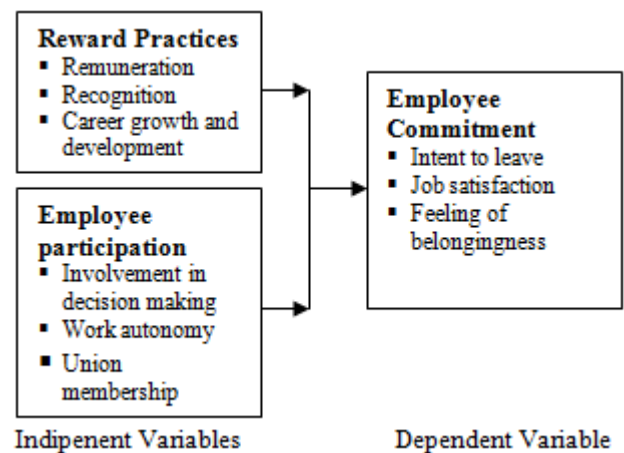


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4.2.1 Reward Practices

Organizational rewards refer to all the benefits, financial and non-financial, that an employee obtains through his/her employment relationship with an organization (Malhotra, Budhwar, & Prowse, 2007). According to the social exchange theory, employees will exhibit greater affective commitment to the organization when it meets their expectations regarding the fulfillment of their individual needs (Haar & Spell, 2004). This social exchange is based on what has been labeled in the literature a “psychological contract” between employer and employee. Psychological contracts, based on the concept of reciprocity, have been shown to play an important role in determining organizational behavior (Garrow, 2004). The provision of rewards by an organization has been shown to be a major factor that strengthens the psychological contract between the employee and employer (Malhotra et al., 2007). There are contrasting views in the literature as to the relative strength of the relationships between the different types of rewards and organizational commitment. Some authors argue that the relationship between extrinsic rewards and organizational commitment is stronger than that between intrinsic or social rewards and organizational commitment as organizations have direct control over their provision. Others argue that intrinsic and social rewards are stronger antecedents of organizational commitment than extrinsic rewards (Newman & Abdullah, 2010). Previous work establishes a positive link between pay satisfaction and the affective commitment of employees. However, other studies produce conflicting results, indicating it may have no relationship or even a negative relationship with affective commitment (Malhotra et al., 2007).

4.2.2 Employee Participation

Joensson (2008) defines participation as the totality of forms by which individuals, groups, collectives secure their interests or contribute to the choice process through self-determined choices among possible actions. Fuller et al. (2006) argue that employee participation is linked with organizational identification because it signals inclusion and that the organization values the individual's opinions. Their field study of hospital employees showed that employee

participation was positively related to employees' perceived respect, i.e. their status within the organization, and, in turn, related to social identification with the organization i.e. organizational identification. Heller (2003) suggests that distribution of power is a necessary condition for enhancing performance and satisfaction by means of employee participation. McGuire and McLaren (2008) argues that employee job satisfaction, commitment and well-being is enhanced when supervisors provide a supportive environment where employees are encouraged to interact and speak out about workplace issues.

4.2.3 Employee Commitment

Employee commitment refers to a psychological state in which the employee shares the values of the organization and adheres to its objectives (Paille' et al., 2011). Meyer et al. (2002) found, on the one hand, a negative link between employee commitment and absenteeism, quitting, stress, work-family conflict and intention to leave the organization and, conversely, positive links between employee commitment and organizational citizenship behavior and work efficiency. Support for employees in the workplace can have a positive effect on employee well-being. Employee who feel supported in the workplace have been found to have higher levels of employee commitment and are more likely to have higher levels of performance. MacLeod and Clarke, argue that organizational support for employees can promote employee well-being in three ways: first, it can help an employee modify a stressful situation; second, it can help an employee develop a new perspective on a stressful situation and three, it can decrease the emotional upset associated with a problematic situation (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009).

5. Methodology

The study adopted a case study research design. The target population for the study was 300 employees in Thika Level 5 Hospital comprising of 25 doctors, 20 clinical officers, 140 nurses and 115 administrative and support staff. The study sample covered 23% from both in-patient and out-patient division translating to a sample of 70 health workers at the hospital. The researcher employed stratified random sampling technique to select the samples for the study. The study used questionnaires to collect primary data from the respondents. The data collected was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (correlation and regression).

6. Results and Analysis

6.1 Reward Practices

The study sought to establish the effects of reward practices on employee commitment at Thika Level 5 Hospital. From the research findings in table [1] majority of the respondents indicated that they are not adequately remunerated by their organization by a mean of 2.63 and Std. Deviation of 1.562; and that they are given formal recognition by their organization to make a difference at a mean of 3.17 and Std. Deviation of 1.372. The findings also indicated that most of

the respondents don't have enough opportunities to grow and develop their career at the hospital by mean of 2.54 and Std. Deviation of 1.031; and that they were not satisfied with the promotion criteria at the hospital at a mean of 2.29 and Std. Deviation of 1.552. However majority of the respondents strongly agreed to be currently searching for a better paying job in other organizations by mean of 2.93 and Std. Deviation of 1.333. The results agree with those of the social exchange theory, employees will exhibit greater affective commitment to the organization when it meets their expectations regarding the fulfillment of their individual needs (Haar & Spell, 2004).

Table 1: Reward Practices

i). Aspects of Reward Practices	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Std Dev
	%	%	%	%	%		
I am adequately remunerated by my organization.	19	16	12	16	37	2.63	1.562
My organization gives formal recognition for employee efforts to make a difference.	14	40	14	11	20	3.17	1.372
I have enough opportunities to grow and develop my career in this organization.	0	27	13	47	13	2.54	1.031
I am satisfied with the promotion criteria in my organization.	11	20	9	6	54	2.29	1.552
I am currently searching for a better paying job in another organization.	50	23	2	21	4	2.93	1.333

6.2 Employee Participation

The study sought to find out whether employee participation influences employee commitment at Thika Level 5 Hospital. The findings in table [2] indicated that most of the health workers at the hospital indicated not to be involved in decision making processes at a mean of 2.64 and Std. Deviation of 1.143; and that they feel encouraged to come up with new and innovative ways of doing things at the workplace by mean of 3.29 and Std. Deviation of 1.131. It was also noted that majority of the respondents indicated that they are represented through a trade union or a workers association by mean of 3.49 and Std. Deviation of 0.974; and that it was the managers only who make all the important decisions at Thika Level 5 Hospital at a mean of 3.07 and Std. Deviation of 0.968. Similarly, they agreed that management holds regular meetings with all staff at a mean of 3.29 and Std. Deviation of 1.353. The results are consistent with a field study by Fuller et al., (2006) who supported that there is a positive association between participation in decision-making and social identification with the organization which in turn improves employee commitment. Joensson (2008) further argues that where managers fail to involve employees in decision making, the employees feel alienated and less willing to accept changes that are imposed on them.

Table 2: Employee Participation

i). Aspects of Employee Participation	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Std Dev
	%	%	%	%	%		
I am adequately involved in decision making processes in my organization.	10	12	19	49	10	2.64	1.143
I feel encouraged to come up with new and innovative ways of doing things at the workplace.	9	47	17	19	8	3.29	1.131
I am represented through a trade union or a workers association.	11	54	11	19	4	3.49	0.974
It is managers only who make all the important decisions in my organization.	14	49	6	14	17	3.07	0.968
The management holds regular meetings with all staff	14	49	6	14	17	3.29	1.353

6.3 Correlation and Regression Analysis

6.3.1 Correlation Analysis

The data presented on reward practices, employee participation and work environment were computed into single variables per factor by obtaining the averages of each factor. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient analysis was then conducted at 95% confidence interval and 5% confidence level 2-tailed to establish the amount of correlation, direction and significance. According to table [3] findings, there is a strong positive relationship between employee commitment and reward practices and employee participation of magnitude 0.307, and 0.453 which are also both statistically significant at level 0.01.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

		Reward Practices	Employee Participation	Employee Commitment
Reward Practices	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	70		
Employee Participation	Pearson Correlation	.536**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	70	70	
Employee Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.307**	.453**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.000	
	N	70	70	70

6.3.2 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to determine how each independent variable (reward practices, and employee participation) affected the dependent variable (employee commitment at Thika Level 5 Hospital). From the regression summary results in table [4], the R Square is 0.861 which shows that employee commitment in Thika Level 5 Hospital was influenced by reward practices and employee participation. This indicated that, reward practices and

employee participation accounts for 86.1% of the variation in employee commitment in Thika Level 5 Hospital. The remaining 13.9% indicated that there are other factors which influence employee commitment in Thika Level 5 Hospital which were not studied in the current study.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.872 ^a	.861	.838

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reward Practices, Employee Participation

ANOVA test was also done to determine whether the model works in explaining the relationship among variables as postulated in the conceptual model. The results in table [5], show an F value of 32.917 with a significance level of 0.000 which is far lower than the confidence level of 0.05, hence establishing a significant relationship. The implication is that each independent variables (reward practices and employee participation) contributes significantly to changes in the dependent variable (employee commitment). This shows that the model works and thus accounts for significantly more variance in the dependent variable than would be expected by chance. Degree of freedom (df) was 3.00 as shown.

Table 5: ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	5.088	3	1.696	32.917	.000 ^b
	Residual	1.597	31	0.052		
	Total	6.686	34			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Reward Practices, Employee Participation

From the results in table [6], the t-test results for the coefficient of multiple determinations for the three independent variables (reward practices and employee participation) were 9.022 and 5.582 respectfully. Once again, the probability of these results occurring by chance was less than 0.05, being less than 0.001 for the two independent variables; reward practices and employee participation. This means that the multiple regression coefficient for the two independent variables (reward practices and employee participation) were statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

From the regression analysis findings in table [6], holding all the independent variables (reward practices and employee participation) constant at zero then employee commitment would be 0.221. Further the findings indicate that an increase in, reward practices and employee participation by one unit would increase employee commitment by 0.825 and 0.478 units respectively. All the independent variables covered had positive influence on employee commitment. However, reward practice was the highest contributor of employee commitment. The regression model was hence summarized as; $Y = 0.221 + 0.825X_1 + 0.478X_2$

Table 6: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	.221	.218		
Reward Practices	.825	.091	.877	9.022	.000
Employee Participation	.478	.088	.582	5.582	.000
Work Environment	.072	.082	.081	.870	.391

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment

7. Conclusion

From the presentation of chapter four and summary above the study concludes that the public health sector and in particular Thika Level 5 Hospital should offer their employees competitive rewards as past theories recommends that employees will exhibit greater affective commitment to the organization when it meets their expectations regarding the fulfillment of their individual needs. It also concludes that there are no proper promotion and career growth opportunities at public hospitals and in particular Thika Level 5 Hospital which has reduced employee commitment to the hospital as a result most of them are seeking employment opportunities in other organizations. The study further concludes that there are no clear job descriptions of employees at Thika Level 5 Hospital and as a result this can contributed to conflicts arising between management and employees in terms of how to carry duties and responsibilities.

8. Recommendations

The study recommends that the public health sector and in particular Thika Level 5 Hospital should provide its employees with rewards that are internally consistent externally competitive. This will increase their level of commitment as they will be able to take care of their needs and hence concentrate at their work since they are well taken care of in terms of remuneration and other rewards by their organizations. It further recommended that clear promotion criteria and career progression need to be put in place at public health sector and in particular at Thika Level 5 Hospital to create good employer employee relationships. Previous research has shown that bad employment relationship contributes to lack of employee commitment which results to conflicts and possible turnover by employees.

The government through the Ministry of Health, and other stakeholders in Kenya should help public hospitals to do employee consultative decision making to reduce and address the issues that lower employee commitment and increase their turnover. Previous research has shown that the working condition in public health sector is bad which has resulted to employees seeking employment in other private sectors and other institutions outside Kenya.

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