

# Effects of Selection Practices on Employee Performance in Public Universities in Kenya

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**Abstract:** *In order for any organization to build and sustain competitive advantage, proper selection practices is critical. When selection practices are done well they ensure that, employees are capable of high productivity, motivated to stay with the organization, able to engage in behavior that result in customer satisfaction and are capable of implementing the strategy of the organization. Poor selection practices may lead to managers selecting wrong applicants for the job as poor employee selection decisions are regularly made. Employees may not perform well in some way due to management problems, poor work attitude or interpersonal problems which lead to poor performance of duties. Coping strategies adopted by corporate organizations in response to environmental changes need also to apply to public universities in Kenya, as higher education world over is undergoing rapid transformation in the face of changing dynamics. The study was guided by the following two research objectives: to establish the effect of selection methods, and competencies of managers involved in the selection process on employee performance in public universities in Kenya. The study used descriptive and survey research design. The target population was 88 Heads of Human Resources Department and HR officers from the 22 public universities in Kenya in which a census was conducted of all the 88 respondents. Primary data was collected by means of questionnaires, and secondary was collected from existing literature related to the study. The quantitative data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics which includes; mean, standard deviation, percentages, and frequencies. While inferential statistics such as correlation and regression using SPSS 21 was used to describe the relationships between the variables. Quantitative data analyzed was presented using tables and charts. And qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis. From the findings the study established that both the independent variables selection methods and competencies of managers involved in the selection process had strong positive correlation with the dependent variable employee performance and statistically significant at level 0.01. On the regression summary the Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is 0.721 which shows that employee performance was affected by selection methods and competencies of managers involved in the selection process. This indicated that there was a variation of 72.1% on employee performance with selection methods and competencies of managers involved in the selection process. The remaining 27.9% indicates that there are other factors which affected employee performance in public universities in Kenya which were not studied in the current study. According to findings holding all the independent variables selection methods and competencies of managers involved in the selection process constant at zero the employee performance would be -5.384. Also the findings indicates that, taking all other independent variables to zero, a unit increase of selection methods led to 1.454 increases in employee performance. A unit increase of competencies of managers involved in the selection process led to 0.789 increases in employee performance. Therefore selection methods have the highest contribution of employee performance in public universities in Kenya. The study recommends that a range of selection methods, that are suitable for assessing both the essential and desirable criteria in the person specification be incorporated as this will enhance objective decision making which is difficult through interview alone. In addition Head of Departments who participate in the selection process of employees in public universities who are not human resource professionals be oriented on employee resourcing and selection practices. Human Resource Policies should be dynamic in line with the current market changes.*

**Keywords:** selection practices, recruitment, managerial competency, employee performance, public universities in Kenya.

## 1. Introduction

There are many ways to improve productivity, but none is more powerful than making the right hiring decision. Top performers in an organization contribute more value to their companies than mid-level or low performers. A firm that selects high quality employees reaps substantial benefits, which recur every year the employee is on the payroll. On the other hand, poor selection decisions can cause irreparable damage. A bad hire can affect the morale of the entire staff, especially in a position where teamwork is critical. Selecting the wrong person for any job can cost a firm money (Mondy & Noe, 2005). Numerous studies have demonstrated that well designed selection practices pay off handsomely (Jackson, Schuler, & Werner, 2009). Therefore the objective of selection is to predict the likely future of performance of applicants in the job that is open as well as in other jobs that the organization might hold in the future. The decision about when to promote or transfer a current employee and in which job is a selection decision. Hiring a person who engages in fraud or illegal activity may end up costing the organization millions (Jackson *et al.*, 2009).

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Currently public universities in Kenya are becoming a major employer of all cadre of staff. This has been due to diversity and increase in the number of students enrolling for various programmes. With the increase in the number of universities most employees are moving from one University to another. This poses a major challenge since it affects the flow of work of the public universities in Kenya.

A study on the quality of service delivery in Public and private universities, by Eshiwani (2009) and Mutisya (2010) confirmed that the quality of education in Kenyan Universities is lowered by among other reasons, cases of missing marks and grades acquired unprocedurally. Ngolovoi (2006) argues that increased workload and lack of competency by some employees could be affecting the delivery of quality of education to students in universities in Kenya. Sifuna (2012) states that African universities in particular Kenyan Universities vice chancellors, deans, heads of departments, school directors and others are often appointed based on academic qualifications, and rarely

receive critical training in strategic planning, budgeting, human resource development and faculty management training areas which are key during the recruitment and selection of employees. Therefore this study looked at the effects of selection practices on employee performance using public universities in Kenya as a case.

### 3. Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to determine the effect of selection practices on employee performance in public universities in Kenya. The study was guided by the following two specific objectives: to establish the effect of selection methods, and competencies of managers involved in the selection process on employee performance in public universities in Kenya.

### 4. Research Methodology

The study used descriptive and survey research design. This design is considered appropriate for this study because it saves time, expenses and the amount of quality information yielded is valid, while interviewer bias is reduced because participants complete identically worded self-reported measures (Adèr, Mellenbergh, & Hand, 2008). A population is defined as a complete set of individuals, cases or objects with some common observable characteristics (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The target population was 88 Heads of Human Resources Department and HR officers from the 22 public universities in Kenya in which a census was conducted of all the 88 respondents. Quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics used includes; mean, standard deviation, percentages, and frequencies. While inferential statistics involved; correlation and regression to determine variables relationships. And qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis.

### 5. Results and Analysis

From the findings on demographic characteristics of respondents, the study established that 55% of the respondents were female while 45% of the respondents were male. This is a clear indication that there are more female employees at public universities in Kenya than male employees. The findings indicated that majority of the respondents 48% are 36-45 years old, followed by 34% of the respondents who were 46-55 years old, 11% of the respondents indicated that they had 56 and above years while only 6% of the respondents were 26-35 years old. This implied that majority of the public universities human

resource employees are between 36-45 years old. From the findings, majority 92% of the respondents indicate that their terms of employment were permanent while the remaining respondents 8% indicated they were under contract terms of employment. According to findings, 35% of the respondents had worked in their universities for 21 years and above while, 29% of the respondents indicated that had worked in the university for 16-20 years. 15% of the respondents indicated they had worked for 11-15 years and 11% of the respondents indicated they had worked for 6-10 years. 15% of the respondents indicated they had worked for 5 years and below. From the findings, majority of respondents 47% had a Bachelor's degree, 40% of the respondents had Masters Degree and 13% had Doctorate degree.

In this section of study respondents were asked to indicate the level of agreement with the given statements on selection methods. According to research findings in (Table 1), the respondents strongly agreed that candidates who clear the preliminary interview are required to fill application blank so as to select the ones that qualify for the selection interview .by a (mean 4.15 & Std.Dev 1.143); and the respondents also strongly agreed that employment application form should contain applicants information relevant to the position they had applied such as address, education, professional background and work history with a (mean 4.45 & Std.Dev 0.919). However, they disagreed with the fact that applicants are informed by their universities that they will undertake various selection tests during the selection process at a (mean 2.42 & Std.Dev 1.499). They also strongly agreed that their universities use Proficiency test to ascertain if the claims made by the candidate regarding his/her ability and skills are true by a (mean 4.61 & Std.Dev 0.491). However they strongly disagree that their universities use Aptitude tests to assess a candidate potential for performing a certain job in future with a (mean 2.21 & Std.Dev 1.549). They also agreed with the fact that selection interviews when used can predict future job performance on the basis of applicants' oral responses to oral inquiries by a (mean 4.61 & Std.Dev 0.491). They however disagree that their universities conduct reference checks during their selection process with a (mean 2.56 & Std.Dev 1.288). They strongly agreed with the fact that both factual checks and character reference are important in decision making during the selection process by a (mean 4.84 & Std.Dev 0.371); similarly, they strongly agreed that Staff with integrity issues can be identified by reference checks with a (mean 4.84 & Std.Dev 0.918).

1 - Strongly disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Not sure, 4 - Agree, 5 - Strongly agree

**Table 1: Selection Methods**

Statement	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Std Dev
The candidates who clear the preliminary interview are required to fill application blank so as to select the ones that qualify for the selection interview.	33	17	0	12	0	4.15	1.143
The employment application form contains applicants information relevant to the position they had applied such as address, education, professional background and work history.	44	12	0	6	0	4.45	0.919
Applicants are informed they will undertake various selection tests during the selection process.	10	9	0	21	22	2.42	1.499
My university uses Proficiency test to ascertain if the claims made by the candidate regarding his/her ability and skills are true.	38	24	0	0	0	4.61	0.491
My university uses Aptitude tests to assess a candidate potential for performing a certain job in future.	9	9	0	12	32	2.21	1.549

Selection interviews when used can predict future job performance on the basis of applicants' oral responses to oral inquiries.	0	43	4	0	15	3.45	0.862
Face to face selection interviews are more effective than telephone interviews during employee selection process in the universities.	38	24	0	0	0	4.61	0.491
My university conducts reference checks during their selection process.	11	4	0	41	6	2.56	1.288
Both factual checks and character reference are important in decision making during the selection process.	52	10	0	0	0	4.84	0.371
Staff with integrity issues can be identified by reference checks.	45	11	0	6	0	4.53	0.918

The study also sought to establish the level of agreement with the given statements on how competencies of managers involved in the selection process affect employee performance in public universities in Kenya. According to research findings in (Table 2), the respondents disagreed that the Human Resource Department in the university trains CODs/HODs who participate in the appointments on the recruitment and selection practices indicated with a (mean 2.11 & Std.Dev 0.811). The respondents strongly agreed that there are equal opportunities for applicants during selection in their university as indicated by a (mean 4.61 & Std.Dev 0.489).

**Table 2:** Competencies of managers involved in the selection process

Statement	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Std Dev
The Human Resource Department in my university trains CODs/HODs who participate in the appointments on recruitment and selection practices.	0	8	0	45	9	2.11	0.811
There are equal opportunities for applicants during selection in my university.	39	22	0	0	0	4.59	0.489

The study sought to establish the attributes the public universities in Kenya use to measure performance. According to findings majority of the respondents 85% indicated they use communication to measure performance in the university while 15% of the respondents indicated they do not use communication as a measure of performance. Majority of the respondents 77% indicated they use customer service to measure performance in the university while 23% of the respondents indicated they do not use customer service as a measure of performance. Majority of the respondents 74% indicated they use attitude to measure performance in the university while 26% of the respondents indicated they do not use attitude as a measure of performance. Majority of the respondents 68% indicated they use teamwork to measure performance in the university while 32% of the respondents indicated they do not use teamwork as a measure of performance. Majority of the respondents 82% indicated they use punctuality to measure performance in the university while 18% of the respondents indicated they do not use punctuality as a measure of performance. Majority of the respondents 89% indicated they use productivity to measure performance in the university while 11% of the respondents indicated they do not use productivity as a measure of performance. Majority of the respondents 81% indicated they use problem solving/analytical skills to measure performance in the university while 19% of the respondents indicated they do not use problem solving/analytical skills as a measure of performance. Majority of the respondents 65% indicated they use job skills /application of technology to measure

performance in the university while 35% of the respondents indicated they do not use job skills/application of technology as a measure of performance. Majority of the respondents 56% indicated they use supervisory responsibilities to measure performance in the university while 44% of the respondents indicated they do not use supervisory responsibilities as a measure of performance.

According to correlation findings in (Table 3), it was established that selection methods has a strong positive correlation with employee performance indicated by the value 0.789 which is also statistically significant at level 0.01. Similarly, it was also established that competencies of managers involved in the selection process has a strong positive correlation with employee performance indicated by the value 0.767 which is also statistically significant at level 0.01.

**Table 3:** Correlation Analysis

		Selection methods	Managerial competency	Employee Performance
Selection methods	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	62		
Managerial competency	Pearson Correlation	.731**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	62	62	
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	.789**	.767**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	62	62	62

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

From the regression summary results (Table 4), the Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is 0.721 which shows that employee performance was affected by selection methods and competencies of managers involved in the selection process. This indicated that there was a variation of 72.1% on employee performance with selection methods and competencies of managers involved in the selection process. The remaining 27.9% indicates that there are other factors which affected employee performance in public universities in Kenya which were not studied in the current study.

**Table 4:** Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.860	.739	.721

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Selection methods, competencies of managers involved in the selection process.

From the ANOVA test results (Table 5), it was established that the mean square is 8.755. The F-test result was 40.413 with a significance of 0.000. This meant that the probability of these results occurring by chance was less than 0.05 (p < 0.05). Therefore, a significant relationship was

present between the dependent variable (employee performance in public universities in Kenya) and the independent variables (Selection methods and competencies of managers involved in the selection process). Degree of freedom (df) was 4.00 as shown.

**Table 5: ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean	F	Sig.
1	Regression	35.022	4	8.755	40.413	.000
	Residual	12.349	57	.217		
	Total	47.371	61			

- a. Dependent Variable: Employee performance
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Selection methods, competencies of managers involved in the selection process.

According to the regression equation established,  $Y = -5.384 + 1.454X_1 + 0.544X_2$ ; where Y is the dependent variable employee performance at Public Universities in Kenya,  $\beta$  is the intercept,  $X_1$ , and  $X_2$  are the independent variables Selection methods and competencies of managers involved in the selection process. According to findings in (Table 6), holding all the independent variables selection methods and competencies of managers involved in the selection process constant at zero the employee performance would be -5.384. Also the findings indicates that, taking all other independent variables to zero, a unit increase of selection methods led to 1.454 increases in employee performance. A unit increase of competencies of managers involved in the selection process led to 0.789 increases in employee performance. Therefore selection methods have the highest contribution of employee performance in public universities in Kenya.

**Table 6: Coefficient of determination**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-5.384	1.868		2.882	.006
	Selection methods	1.454	.313	.758	4.640	.000
	Managerial competency	.544	.113	.494	4.800	.000

- c. a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

## 6. Conclusions

The study concludes that there is a strong significant positive relationship between selection methods and employee performance to a great extent in public universities in Kenya. However from the finding most respondents indicated that selection tests were conducted to a small extent in their university and in some universities such tests were not conducted at all. The study further concludes that managerial selection competency also had a strong positive relationship with employee performance. Since the final decision of the candidate to be appointed comes from the managers in the panel their choice determines the performance to be brought into the organization. Therefore this study therefore concludes that selection methods enable organizations obtain qualified staff

and the managerial selection competency is a key area in realizing that the said staff are selected.

## 7. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made. That public universities in should endeavor to have structured selection practices as a guide in their recruitment and selection practices. Recruitment and selection policies should be upheld during the selection process for fairness. Apart from the Newspaper advertisements public universities should also use other recruitment sources and other selection methods should be incorporate in the current recruitment and selection practices in public universities.

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