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INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT ON RETENTION IN PRIVATE SECURITY FIRMS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The challenge of employee retention is a global problem that affects organizations in both developing and developed countries. Even though a lot has been done towards addressing the problem, the situation has continued to be experienced among private security firms in [Nairobi City County](#), Kenya. The main objective of this study was to determine the influence of employee commitment on retention in private security firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The work environment was used as a moderating variable. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population of this research was 50 private security firms in Nairobi City County registered with Kenya Security Industry Association. Primary data was collected using a close-ended questionnaire. The study was anchored by Kahn's theory of engagement. Data was analyzed with the aid of SPSS version 25.0 and presented using descriptive and inferential statistics. Simple and multiple regression analysis was used to establish the relationship between variables and the t-statistic at a 95% significance level was adopted in testing the hypothesis of the study. The overall significance was tested using F-test. The study established a positive significant effect of employee commitment on retention with a regression coefficient of 0.799 and a p-value of 0.000 implying that employee commitment affected retention. The interaction between work environment and employee commitment had a regression coefficient of 2.330 and a p-value of 0.025 imply-

INTRODUCTION

Employee commitment is termed as the amount of passion a worker holds towards the duties allocated to them at their workplace (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). It is also defined as a sense of obligation that an employee holds to the vision, goals, objectives, and mission of the firm they are working for (Mercy, 2014). Engaged employees are said to be committed when they identify themselves with their organization

and are not willing to leave. An employee is termed to be committed when he is completely dedicated to his duties, reliable, and aligned to organizational goals, vision and mission (Ibrahim & Falasi, 2014). Employee commitment is influenced by numerous factors for instance; the time of life an employee has been in the company, leadership, and job design (Luthans, 2000). For organizations to ensure employee commitment they should be dedicated to ensuring

employee empowerment, open and free communication, strong work ethics, and a culture of trust and innovation (Janssen, 2004).

Cesário and Chambel (2017) displayed three major types of employee commitment; an affective commitment which is, workers' emotional closeness and engrossment with the company, continuance commitment which is, the prolongation of the period of service stimulated by the expenses connected with exiting the firm, and normative commitment that is, dedication to staying at the workplace coming up from pressure exerted from the outside. Employees with sentimental commitment can be considered most desirable for the company since they are most likely to stay longer and contribute to the firm's performance. Princy and Rebeka (2019) did a study on employee commitment to organization performance and resolved that commitment had an impact on organizational performance. This study focused on performance whereas the current study focused on retention.

Work environment comprises all factors that affect employee productivity. It is the relationship that occurs between the worker and their work environment (Nasidi *et al.*, 2019). The work environment is made up of factors such as organizational support, supervisory support, peer support, and rate of pay (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004). A conducive supportive work environment is important in ensuring employees remain engaged and work in the organization for an extended period (Rhoades *et al.*, 2001). A conducive work environment ensures employees stay engaged with an increased intention to remain in the firm for long, it improves the commitment and loyalty of employees in return, strengthening the workers' mental connection with their organization (Rhoades *et al.*, 2001). Past research has revealed that good organizational support results in increased employee involvement, and a firm's commitment which further results in a decreased rate of turnover (Eisenberger *et al.* 2002). The study further concluded that negative supervision is related to employee low retention rate. It also

stated that if employee perceives that organization value their contribution and that the management takes care of them, then they will be engaged and willing to stay for a longer period in their place of work. Chidiebere *et al.* (2017) in their study stated that the rate of pay affects employee engagement and willingness to remain in the organization. The study concluded that pay rate positively affected employee commitment, performance, loyalty and job satisfaction. This study used different conceptualization of employee commitment.

In a study by Mandhanya (2015), it was established that the work environment positively affected employee retention. The study also revealed that a conducive and responsive environment when provided at the place of work enhances retention. A study by Bibi *et al.* (2016) revealed that the workplace environment altered the rate of pay and retention relationship. It was concluded that pay and security of tender had an imperative connection with employees' retention. The current study adopted the work environment as a moderator instead of independent variable.

Retention of workers is an important aspect of a firm's success (Ali *et al.*, 2019). It is the process whereby workers are encouraged to continue working for their organization for a longer period, or pending the organization's completion of its objectives and goals (Singh & Dixit, 2011). The Corporate Leadership Council (2004) in their research concluded that employee engagement reduces workers' intention to leave. The study concluded that a great number of engaged workers were 87% less probable to move out of their current organization. The same study found that a hundred workplaces with a conducive environment had a normal voluntary exit that averaged a 13% rate as related to the average of 28.5% of extra firms in the same industries. Retention of employees is a great challenge to most organizations worldwide such that, organizations face increased costs, for example, recruitment costs, training, and development cost, increased organizational brain drain that is loss of well-experienced employees which may result in lowered

morale for the remaining employee (Yazinski, 2009).

Lowers and Associates (2019) reported a global employee turnover rate at 9.6 %, with the highest turnover in the functions of finance 12.7%, sale 12.6 %, and HR 12.6 %. In Kenya, more than 68% of organizations are experiencing retention problems with a greater number of employees moving from one organization to another (PWC, 2013). Due to the continued competition in the labor markets and high demand for talents, the management is faced with the obligation of designing strategies to ensure increased retention. Sutanto & Kurniawan, (2016) stated that an employee retention rate of 90% or more is termed good for the organization. Khalid and Nawab (2018) concluded that employee participation influences employee retention positively.

Private security companies were registered in Kenya in the 1960s on large industrial sites. Increases in insecurity rates coupled with incapability of public safety services to ensure enough protection have been the two key contributing aspects toward the massive growth of private security firms (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2005). Mkutu and Sabala (2016) in their study, indicated that there are nearly 2000 private security companies in Kenya, with many of them based in Nairobi City County Kenya. A study by Zheng and Xia (2021) approximated that there exist around 300,000 private security workers employed by around 600 firms that are actively operating in Kenya. According to Kenya Security Industry Association (2020), Nairobi City County, Kenya has 50 security firms being the county with the largest number of registered firms with the association.

Despite the continued progress of the security sector, there remains an outstanding low retention rate of private security employees who view their occupation as a stepping stone for absorption into different jobs. The employee retention rate in these firms remains below 5% per year. This low rate of retention has caused private security firms to offer poor services while others have been forced to close down due to poor

performance (Zheng & Xia 2021).

According to Kenya National Private Security Workers Union (2020), employee retention in these firms remains below 5% with Nairobi City County, Kenya not being an exemption. In Kenya, 50% of private hospitals experienced a high challenge of staff turnover, Kenyan banks 10-15% annually (PWC 2013) while the teacher's service commission of Kenya reported 45% of teacher's intention to quit (Oduor 2015). Private security employees' uncondusive working environments with minimal wages has brought about decreasing rates of employee retention by security firms (Minnar & Ngoveni, 2004). Nasir and Mahmood (2018) stated that an employee can remain and be loyal, committed, and accountable if they feel valued by the management of the firm they are working for. A low employee retention rate leads to increased operating costs for the organization, low morale for remaining employees, loss of customers, and poor performance and productivity. The retention of well-qualified employees guarantees continued improved performance, customer fulfillment, contented workmates, and timely achievement of organizational goals and objectives. In addition, it encourages operative succession planning, leading to an engaged organization (Shivangee & Pankaj, 2011). Kamau (2012) did a study on elements that affect firms' commitment to the staff at Kenya plant health inspectorate service (KPHIS) corporation. The research used a case study design and primary data was gathered from 100 employees. Factor analysis; median, central tendency and standard deviation was employed to analyze the information collected. This study highlighted factors such as education, duration of service, and job category to influence employee commitment which further may result to worker's desire to exit or remain at the place of work. The research was restricted to identifying the aspects that influence the organizational commitment of workers at KPHIS in Kenya. This study was done in a different operating environment and organizational setup. This study adopted a case study while the current study employed a descriptive research design to investigate

whether the findings will be different.

In a study on the elements that affect the commitment of workers and its impact on organizational performance in Kenya Airport Authority (Kamau, 2015), it was concluded that historical success of the authority, salary, team cooperation, training, and development, were among the factors that influenced staff commitment. The study also concluded that individual factors such as the desire for individual progress, demographic aspects, staff work satisfaction, participation of staff in making choices on matters that touch them, and stress level caused by the job greatly influence staff commitment. This study focused mainly on factors that impact a firm's commitment to employees necessitating the present research to explore the impact of employee commitment on retention.

Similarly, Shubaka (2014) examined the connection between staff retention tactics and commitment in Kenyan insurance companies and recommended the need to appraise retention approaches. The research employed a research methodology descriptive in nature and analyzed the primary data gathered from 46 insurance companies in Kenya by use of SPSS and represented in charts and tables. The research concluded that exceedingly committed workers are a great asset to the organization. This study focused on the connection between retention tactics and commitment whereas the current study concentrated on the impact of staff commitment on retention and the influence of work environment on this relationship as a moderator.

[Islam and Rahman \(2016\)](#) researched the connection between firm's commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions on unionized bank workers in selected Banks in Bangladesh. Descriptive research approach was used. A purposive sampling method was employed. Data were analyzed using multivariate analysis techniques, specifically factor analysis. Descriptive statistics were employed. The results of the research were that representations, an excellent promotional system, a fair rewarding system, support in a personal emergency

from the organization, and workplace flexibility in performing tasks were the most influential factors on job satisfaction and firms' commitment. This research suggested that employees' firm's commitment will increase when fairly paid and their working environment is conducive which will lead to reduced turnover meaning there will be an increase in employee retention. This context of the study was a bank setting and used a purposive sampling method whereas the current study focused on private security firms and used a census technique.

Mandago (2014) researched on the influence of contract of service on worker's engagement and staff commitment of workers in the coffee board of Kenya and posited that, defined terms of service results in increased worker's engagement and staff commitment. It was also established that inadequate pay for overtime hours worked, negatively affected staff dedication and workers' commitment. The research collected data from 50 employees of the coffee board of Kenya by use of questionnaires. The research used a descriptive survey design and data was analyzed via regression analysis. This research focused on terms of service on employee engagement and staff commitment while the current research focused on employee commitment and retention and work environment as a moderator

In a study by Maliku (2014) to explore the alleged connection amongst worker retention strategies and firm performance of National Oil Corporation of Kenya, it was revealed that 80% of staff retention strategies investigated were temporarily used which led to decreased employee performance. The research employed descriptive survey design and consensus techniques to base its results on the opinions of the entire population. Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire and examined by use of descriptive Statistics consisting of frequencies, mean, standard deviation and distribution percentages. A study by Mokaya (2014) sought to explore the impact of staff retention policies on performance of Kenya Power and Lighting Company Limited and concluded that having proper retention practices improves employee commitment

and thus organization performance. The two studies determined the relationship between staff retention approaches and organization performance hence the need to examine the effect of employee commitment on retention. These studies used employee retention as an independent variable while the current study used retention as the dependent variable.

The objectives of the study were to investigate the effect of employee commitment on retention of private security firms in Nairobi County and to assess the moderating effect of work environment on the relationship between employee commitment and retention of private security firms in Nairobi County. The null hypotheses were that there is no statistically significant relationship between employee commitment and retention of private security firms in Nairobi County and that there is no statistically significant moderating effect of work environment on the relationship between employee commitment and retention of private security firms in Nairobi County.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design since it facilitated in choosing and grouping of the components and features of object. The study undertook a census of all the 50 private security firms in Nairobi County. Data was collected using a questionnaire. Descriptive and Inferential statistics were used to analyze data. Simple and Multiple linear regression analyses were then conducted using SPSS software version 25.0 in order to address study objective. Assumption of linear regression model of normality, multicollinearity and heteroskedasticity were tested before analyzing data.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	EC	WE	R
Mean	4.0668	4.0837	3.8334
Standard Deviation	0.7669	0.5980	0.7114

Where: EC-Employee Commitment
 WE-Work Environment
 R-Retention

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Diagnostic Tests

Test for Normality

Shapiro-Wilk Test and coefficient of skewness were used to test for normality (Aczel & Sounderpadian, 2002). The p-value of Shapiro Wilk Test was 0.987 which is greater than 0.05 (insignificant) hence a conclusion that the residual was normally distributed.

Multicollinearity Test

Incidence and degree of multicollinearity if any, was tested using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The VIF value was 1.563 less than 10 therefore, multicollinearity was absent. Multicollinearity may lead to wrong results due to its effect of inflating the predictor variables (Cooper & Schindler 2003).

Heteroskedasticity Test

This study used P-P plot to determine if the residuals had constant variance because they are best in the presentation of spread of residuals. The results indicated no specific pattern and the widths were neither increasing nor decreasing as the variables rise. Therefore, heteroskedasticity is absent.

Employee Commitment and Retention

Employee Commitment was measured in terms of [dedication to duty, reliability and alignment](#). Work environment was measured using organization support, supervisor’s support and rate of pay while retention was measured using length of service, rate of voluntary exit and termination rate. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, range, minimum and maximum for employee commitment, work environment and retention were carried out. The summary of descriptive statistics is shown in Table 1.

Employee commitment had a mean of 4.0668 which implies that private security firms benefit from committed employees. As shown in Table 1 above, the mean for retention was 3.8334 for all the private security firms which represents the average private security firm’s retention. Work environment had a mean of 4.0837 and a standard deviation of 0.5980 implying less deviation from the mean thus, an increase

in work environment positively affects the relationship between employee commitment and retention.

Pearson Correlation between the Study Variables

Correlation determines the direction of a relationship between any two variables (Table 2).

Table 2: Pearson correlation between study variables

Variables	R	EC
R	1	0.
EC	0.730	1

Where: R-Retention

EC-Employee Commitment

The results show that employee commitment had a Pearson correlation of 0.730 with a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ implying a positive and statistically significant relationship between retention and employee commitment. This is because when employees are committed to their job they will be more willing to remain long in their jobs. This suggests that an increase in em-

ployee commitment would lead to statistically significant increase in retention.

Multiple Linear Regression

This study determined the significance of employee commitment on retention in private security firms in Nairobi County. A multiple linear regression was used to examine the relationship between employee commitment and retention. A multiple linear regression analysis is represented in Table 3.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		T	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.764	.468	1.632	.110					
Employee Commitment	.799	.114	7.001	.000	.730	.730	.730	1.000	1.000

$R^2=0.533$

The results in Table 3 shows that the regression coefficient of employee commitment was 0.799 with a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ indicating that, employee commitment had a positive and statistically significant effect on retention. The R^2 of the model was 0.533 indicating that, 53.3% of the changes in retention could be accounted for by employee commitment while 46.7% of the changes would be attributed to other factors not included in the study and the error term.

The results show that there is a significant relationship between employee commitment and retention. This implies that a unit increase in employee commitment leads to an increase of retention by a factor of 0.799. The null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between employee commitment and retention rate in private security firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya is not supported in the current study and therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This infers that

employee commitment positively influences retention in private security firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya. This is an indication that the respondents agreed that employee's commitment affects retention rate. The simple regression model for effect of employee commitment on retention can be presented by the equation below.

$$Y=0.764+0.799 X_1$$

Where:

Y = The dependent variable (retention)

X_1 = Employee Commitment

0.764 = y - Intercept (constant). Estimate the expected value of retention rate when employee commitment is zero (Constant).

0.799 = an estimate of the expected increase in retention rate in response to a unit increase in employee commitment.

The study found constant of regression was 0.764 implying that when other factors are held constant retention is equal to 0.764 units. The slope of regression model obtained was 0.799 and it implies that an increase in employee commitment by one-unit results to 0.799 units surge in retention rate. The relationship between employee commitment and retention rate was statistically significant with a regression coefficient of 0.799. The argument is that employees that are reliable, dedicated to their duty and aligned to organizational goals tend to remain longer in their firms compared to those who do not. Also, the management will not be willing to terminate their services. These results concur with Kahn' theory of employee engagement implying that human resource managers agreed that employee commitment affects worker's intention to remain in their firm. These results are consistent with

Islam and Rahman (2016) and Lady *et al* (2018) who found that employee commitment affected retention.

Test of the Moderating Effect

Work environment was hypothesized as a moderating variable. Moderation implied an interaction effect, where introducing a moderating variable changes the direction or magnitude of the relationship between the two variables. The test of significance of the moderating variable is presented in Table 4. The results in Table 4 show that model 1 is significant at 5% significance level without the interaction effect since it had a t-statistic of -2.071 and a p-value of $0.045 < 0.005$. Model 2 had a t-statistic of 2.330 with a p-value of $0.025 < 0.05$ which is significant at 5% significance level. Model 2 account for more variance change in the interaction between work environment and the relationship between employee commitment and retention. Results imply that work environment has a predictive value on the relationship between employee commitment and retention and when combined with employee commitment it improves retention rate. The results concur with two factor theory and Theory X and Y in that job context, including such things as pay and working conditions relate to hygiene factors. This relates to the work environment in terms of supervisor's support and organization support which encourages managers to have a good relationship with the employees to motivate them to work. These results concur with Raziq and Maulababakh (2015) and Bushiri (2014) findings on work environment having a moderating effect on the relationship between independent variable and dependent variable.

Table 4: Model summary

Model	Coefficients	Std error	t-statistic	p-value
Model 1				
(Constant)	-2.148	1.037	-2.071	.045
Employee Commitment	-.298	.176	-1.698	.097
Work Environment	1.875	.234	8.018	.000
Model 2				
(Constant)	27.279	12.666	2.154	.037
Employee Commitment	-8.237	3.410	-2.154	.020
Work Environment	-5.529	3.185	-1.736	.090
Employee Commitment* Work Environment	1.996	.856	2.330	.025

R² for model 1=0.104. R² for model 2=0.206

Table 5: Anova Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F change	Sig F change
1	0.778	.606	.587	32.258	.000
2	0.807	.652	.626	5.431	.025

The results in Table 5 indicate that work environment alters the relationship between employee commitment and retention. The regression equation for the model is: $Y=27.279-8.237X-5.529M+1.996 X.M$ There is an increase in adjusted R squared with a p-value of $0.025 < 0.005$ indicating that there is potentially significant moderation between work environment and the relationship between employee commitment and retention as shown in Table 5. This shows the effect of employee commitment on retention depends on the interaction with

the moderating variable whereas, the effect of work environment on retention is dependent on employee commitment. These findings are similar to a study by Mwangi (2017) on the effects of compensation on retention in jubilee insurance company limited Kenya which concluded that wages, salaries, and employee benefits influence employee retention.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to investigate the effect of employee commitment on retention in private security firms in Nairobi County. The finding of the study established that employee commitment had a positive effect on retention. This implies that private security firms should invest in ensuring employees are committed to their work since it increases retention of the employees.

Table 2: Direct Financial Rewards

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there is a need for private security firms to develop human resource practices aimed at ensuring that their employees are committed to the organization to encourage them to remain longer in the organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Firms should come up with strategies to encourage employee commitment whereby employees will be dedicated, reliable and aligned to organizational goals and objectives which could aid in improving retention

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