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**EFFECT OF TALENT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES ON EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AT KENYA FOREST SERVICE,
UASIN GISHU COUNTY**

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**EFFECT OF TALENT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES ON EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AT KENYA FOREST SERVICE,
UASIN GISHU COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

Organizations in the global arena, talent development and employee commitment are of increasing strategic importance as it guarantees zero talent outages and business continuity. The study specific objectives were; to evaluate the effect of employee empowerment and career development on employee commitment at Kenya Forest Service, Uasin Gishu County. The study purpose and specific objectives were informed by resource-based theory, which provide a basis synergizing talent development practices for employee commitment. In a bid to effectively achieve these objectives, the study was descriptive design based on samples drawn from across, Kenya Forest Service in Uasin Gishu County. Census technique was adopted to arrive at the sample size of 90 respondents. The questionnaire was piloted at Marakwet County conservancy. Validity and Reliability of research instruments were obtained by using the Cronbach alpha. The computed Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the research instrument of 0.7 Cronbach's Alpha and above was accepted in the study. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. Pearson product moment correlation was used by the study to test the effect between the study variables. Data was presented in the form of frequency distribution tables, frequencies, and percentages. The study found that employee empowerment has a positive and statistically significant effect on the employee commitment at KFS in Uasin Gishu county ($\beta = 0.375$; $p < 0.05$), career development also had a positive and statistically significant effect on employee commitment at KFS in Uasin Gishu county ($\beta = 0.251$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that indeed talent development is very crucial and indeed very vital in improving the performance of employee commitment in Kenya forest service in Uasin Gishu county. Further employee commitment can be continuously improved by self-instilled willingness by the employees to zealously contribute towards the attainment of organizational goals. Further, addressing talent development issues in our current parastatals leads to betterment of employee commitment especially in Kenya forest service in Uasin Gishu County. The improvement of the employee empowerment will lead to improved employee commitment. These results implied that all the variables were positive and statistically significant.

Key words: Talent Development, Commitment, Strategies, Employee Empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

Employee commitment plays a bridge role in employee performance (Berberoglu & Secim, 2015). It therefore implies that employee commitment is a significant factor that translates to employees' output. Employee commitment is a multinational construct in which an employee exerts effort, show congruency with value and goals of an organization and have a desire to organizational membership (Boehman, 2006) cited in (Hafiz, 2017). Organizational commitment is therefore a self-instilled willingness by the employees to zealously contribute towards the attainment of organizational goals. Committed employees demonstrate a substantial amount of effort for their employer with an aim to support and remain active in the organization (Warsame, 2015).

Employee empowerment is widely viewed as a promising approach to improve operating efficiency and customer service (Emma, Mónica & Carlos, 2017). But the most effective way to empower the staff is not always clear to hospitality managers, both in terms of what to do and what to avoid. This study will test a model of the effect of empowerment, job satisfaction, self. Thus, improving talents through talent development remains essential in increasing employee commitment. This is corroborated by Emma, Mónica and Carlos, (2017) who opined that there is a positive effect between talent management components (talent acquisition, talent development & talent retention) and the dimensions of employee commitment.

Career growth which encompasses career advancement and career development as a phenomenon has been a major concern to scholars, researchers, decision makers and human resources experts. Moreover, committed employees show their loyalty and become productive individuals in their organizations hence competitive advantage (Jalal, 2016). Employees who are committed become more familiar with the work culture and inspire other employees to be more loyal towards the company (Tamanna, 2018). In this regard

quantity of human resources that is needed to work and to produce products or services is not only what an organization needs but quality of those resources is the real need which is recognized as one of the leading factors contributing to sustainable competitive advantage in organizations (Eman, 2017).

In Malaysia talent development is in a nascent state with different companies operationalizing it differently. There is also concern in Malaysia about critical talent migrating to other countries in the form of brain drain due to poor implementation of talent management programs. Conversely, in the absence of proper talent development strategies achieving employee commitment remains a challenge (Ramu, 2014). Therefore it remains important to understand the essence of talent development in the day to day running of an organization and how it affects employee commitment. According to Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam, (2012) 67.3% of Malaysian multinational companies had implemented talent management in their organizations. Those that had implemented reported significance effect between developing talents, talent attraction, talent retention and successful talent management in organizations.

In Africa, there is a rising war for talent especially between the public and the private sector and as companies gear up for growth, the demand for skills needed to support such ambitions has increased, and is being matched by greater mobility in the labour market hence a challenge in enhancing organization commitment (Storey, 2014). Public sector administration in sub-Saharan Africa is ingrained with a myriad of problems of the logical perception between worker dissatisfaction and demonization of job standards affecting the commitment of employees (Abugre, 2014). The public service in most African countries for a long time has been characterized by corruption, low productivity inefficiency, lack of transparency and accountability (Bersin., 2014).

South Africa is currently experiencing a brain drain that could severely impact its competitiveness owing to poor talent development and organizational commitment (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). According to Oehley (2007). Many poor African countries have lost some of their highly skilled professionals to the United States, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Australia and the Gulf States (Gara, 2007). Therefore, public sector organizations human resource management should design the formal systems to develop human talents in order to enhance organizational commitment to achieve their goals. Through talent development programs, employees are more confident and will perceive their company more positively and become more committed (Kabir, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Employee commitment plays a bridge role in employee performance. It therefore implies that employee commitment is a significant factor that translates to employees' output. Managerial practices are decisive for employees' employee commitment because they communicate the key values in the employee identity and how such values are translated into acceptable behavior. Conversely, in the absence of proper talent development strategies achieving employee commitment remains a challenge. The war for talent has become intense due to labor market shortages hence need for their commitment. In spite of these, employment effect is awash with challenges that have the implication for employee commitment. The often-endorsed tenet that talent development has a positive influence on employee commitment in the public service is unsubstantiated precipitating a great risk of fallacy. However majority of studies have been done outside Africa and Kenya thus the perceptions may be in turn affected by the country's cultural values, so it is to be expected that public employees from different cultures will display different levels of job satisfaction ,job engagement and organization commitment (Hu, 2014). In addition, most of the

studies have concentrated on business entities with the aim of profit maximization whose findings may not be generalized to public organizations due to differences in institutional characteristics hence an empirical gap in literature. In this regard the study was conducted in order to fill the existing gap in literature by focusing on the effect of talent development strategies on employee commitment in the public sector.

Study Objectives

The objectives of this study were;

- To determine the effect of employee empowerment on employee commitment at Kenya Forest Service.
- To determine the effect of career development on employee commitment at Kenya Forest Service.

The study was guided by the following research hypotheses;

- **Ho₁:** Employee empowerment has no statistically significant effect on employee commitment at Kenya Forest Service.
- **Ho₂:** Career development has no statistically significant effect on employee commitment at Kenya Forest Service.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Resource Based Theory

The resource-based view theory was propounded by Barney (1991). It is a managerial framework theory used to determine the strategic resources with the potential of giving competitive advantage to the firm. It holds that a firm's competitive advantage is dependent on the extent to which it has and utilizes resources, competencies and capabilities. The resources include: talents, employment of skilled personnel and machinery (Altinoz, Cakiroglu&Cop, 2013). These resources are bundles of tangible and intangible assets such as a firm's management skills, its employee processes and routines, and the information and knowledge. Talents are important to the organizations since they are valuable, rare, in-imitable (costly to imitate), and non- substitutable (VRIN) and are a

source of sustained competitive advantage (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

The RBV explains value creation superiority, competitive advantages, and resulting rents of firms through their possession of valuable resources (talents). The RBV argues that valuable resources have to be protected, that is closed to externals, to ensure competitive advantages and growth of the organization. Firms' performance improves, if resources are cared for, nurtured and protected (Erkut, Nur, & Zafer, 2018). When an organization identifies the talents which will provide it with competitive advantage the organization is sure to fulfill its objectives, satisfy and even delight customers and this will result to growth of that organization since the firm will also care for those talents by ensuring that there is no way they could be taken away.

The theory also stresses the need to nurture talents and protect them from competitors. Nurturing will help improve the capabilities of the talents and even enable them exceed their performance and the outcome of this will be high productivity and growth of the organization (Armstrong & Shimizu, 2010). Resource-based view of HR includes the development of HR as an independent resource capable of creating competitive advantage for the organization such as through employee commitment. The theory is that each organization strives to create their own independent HR designs that are different and individualized, in order to add to the competitive advantages of the organization (Rasool & Nouman, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using the descriptive research design. The design entails collecting data from a sample population and analyzing it in order to establish causal explanations between the independent and dependent variables. A sample frame is the group of individuals that can be selected from the target population given the sampling process used in the study and how they are accessed (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018). In this

study, the sample frame consisted of all the staff from all the Kenya forest service stations from Uasin Gishu County which included Kapseret, Timboroa, Cengalo, Kipkurere, Nabkoi, Ecosystem managers, Lorenge, Head of conservancy stations. Sample designs was based on two factors; the representation principle and the element selection technique.

In this study simple random sampling technique was adopted to arrive at the sample size which was 116 respondents. The study used one data collection instrument. Questionnaires were developed from the objectives of the study and administered on the respondents. The questionnaires were designed in terms of five-point Likert scale. The questionnaires sought for personal information of the respondents and that concerning talent development and employee commitment at Kenya forest service. They were distributed to respondents by the researcher and research assistants giving respondents sufficient time to answer the questions. Piloting was done to pre-test the data gathering tool which, in this case, was the questionnaire. This was done to ensure the goodness of the study design. The questionnaires were piloted at Kenya forest service Marakwet County. It involved 10% of the size of the sample population (Kothari & Garg, 2014). This means that 12 respondents participated in the piloting of the data instrument.

To ensure reliability of the study, respondents were randomly selected to give each member of the target population an equal chance of participating in the study. A pilot study was conducted at the Marakwet County Kenya forest service. The scores obtained from respondents were then be correlated using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software. Internal consistency of measures was established through computation of the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient.

Content validity is the extent to which the instruments adequately cover the full range of the

concept's meanings. To achieve this, the study was reviewed literature to identify the relevant concepts. The study generalized the findings to the population of Kenya forest service from which the samples were drawn from.

Both descriptive and quantitative data were collected using the questionnaires from the respondents. Because of the large number of respondents, the study recruited and trained two research assistants to assist in administering the questionnaires on the respondents. The researcher liaised with the supervisors of the Kenya forest service from which samples was drawn from to be allowed to administer the research instruments on the concerned subjects personally and through the research assistants.

Data analysis was done using both quantitative methods. The data collected was edited, coded and then analyzed using the SPSS version 24. This software enabled the study to manipulate and transform variables into desired forms and through its set of procedures, the collected data was comprehensively analyzed (Kalbfleisch & Prentice, 2011). Descriptive data analysis techniques

comprising of means and standard deviation was used to measure central tendencies and dispersion where applicable. Inferential analysis comprises of regression analysis and Pearson moment of correlation analysis. Data was also analyzed using ANOVA. Data were then presented in tables in terms of frequencies and percentages.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaires were distributed to the identified staff cadres of the Kenya forest service in Uasin Gishu County. The total questionnaires distributed to the respondents were 90 out of which 90 questionnaires were successfully completed and returned by the researcher. The response rate was therefore 100 % of the sample size. Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) observed that a 50% response rate is adequate, 60% good and above, while 70% rated very good. Hence this response rate of 100% is considered satisfactory to make conclusions for the study.

Cronbach alpha was used by the study to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above is the desired level for the reliability of the questionnaires. The results were shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Pilot Test Results

Variables	Tested Items	Cronbach Alpha Coefficients
1. Employee Empowerment	3	0.728
2. Career Development	3	0.812

Employee Empowerment and Employee Commitment

The first objective of the study was to determine the effect of employee empowerment on employee

commitment at Kenya Forest Service. The respondents were asked to respond to the statements in regard to motivation, reward and support. Results were shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Empowerment

Statements		SA	A	N	D	SD	Min	Max	M	SDV
Employees are motivated so as to Improve performance	F	47	35	3	3	2	1	5	4.36	0.88
	%	52.2	38.9	3.3	3.3	2.2				
Organization provides rewards to Employees	F	41	41	2	4	2	1	5	4.28	0.89
	%	45.6	45.6	2.2	4.4	2.2				
Support activities is a contribution And care about employees	F	45	39	2	1	3	1	5	4.36	0.87
	%	50.0	43.3	2.2	1.1	3.3				

Valid N= 90

The findings in Table 2 showed that majority of the respondents 82 (93.6%) agrees that employees at Kenya forest service in Uasin Gishu county are motivated so as to improve on performance (M=4.36, Std.=0.88). While only 5(5.5%) of the respondents disagreed that employees were motivated in order to improve on their performance. Only 3(3.3%) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed on whether Kenya forest service motivated its employees in order to improve on performance. On whether Kenya forest service provided rewards to employees, majority of the respondents 82(91.2%) agreed that they received rewards from the management of Kenya forest service (M=4.28, Std.= 0.89). This implied that KFS provided rewards to employees in order to improve on their performance. Furthermore, majority of the respondents 84(93.3%) agreed out

that KFS provides support activities to its employees as a way of providing care to its employees while only 4(4.4%) disagreed that KFS provides support to its employees (M=4.36, Std.=0.87). The overall findings of the study concurred with the findings of Zaraket, Garios and Layla (2018) who a positive relation between the components of employee empowerment and employee commitment. This implied that there is need for KFS to continue strengthening motivation, reward and support of employees in order to improve its performance.

Career Development and Employee Commitment

The second objective of the study was to determine the effect of career development on employee commitment at Kenya Forest Service. The respondents were asked to respond to the statements in regard to learning, mentoring and training. Results were shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Career Development

Statements		SA	A	N	D	SD	Min	Max	M	SDV
Organization has a learning policy	F	40	40	4	3	3	1	5	4.23	0.93
To foster employee career growth	%	44.4	44.4	4.4	3.3	3.3				
Organization has adopted mentoring Programs to employees	F	41	43	2	2	2	1	5	4.32	0.81
	%	45.6	47.8	2.2	2.2	2.2				
Organization provides training to staff	F	34	44	5	4	3	1	5	4.13	0.95
For career development	%	37.8	48.9	5.6	4.4	3.3				

Valid N= 90

The findings in Table 3 indicated that majority of the respondents 106(96.4%) agreed that KFS had adopted a learning policy in order to foster employee career growth. While 2(1.8%) disagreed that KFS had adopted a learning policy to foster employee career growth. Only 2(1.8%) neither agreed nor disagreed (M=3.53, Std.=0.91). Furthermore, majority of the respondents agreed that KFS had adopted mentoring programs to its employees 105(95.5%), while only 2(1.8%) of the respondents disagreed that there is mentoring programs and only 3(2.7%) of the respondents disagreed on whether KFS has adopted mentoring programs (M=3.21, Std.=0.82).

Lastly, majority of the employees agreed that KFS provided continuous training to its staff for career development 104(94.6%). While only 3(2.7%) disagreed that KFS provides adequate training to its employees for career development. Also, only 3(2.7%), neither agreed nor disagreed that KFS provides training to its employees. The findings of this study fully concurs with the findings of Dialoke and Wabara (2017) whom in their study revealed that mentoring and job enrichment enhances employee commitment in the higher institutions. The study findings implied that human resource managers should incorporate mentoring and job enrichment as factors that can improve career

development of their employees which in turn increases their commitment to achieve employee goals.

Multicollinearity Assumption

Table 4: Test Results of Multicollinearity

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)		
1. Employee empowerment	.785	1.273
2. Career development	.550	1.819

The study tested Multicollinearity assumption using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance. The threshold in the regression model should be 0.10. The results were shown in Table 4.

Regression Coefficients

The study used regression coefficients so as to establish the relationship between talent management strategies and employee commitment. The statistical significance of each

regression coefficient with aim of determining the beta values which shows the degree at which the independent variables affect the dependent variable. Results were as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Regression Coefficient Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.038	.409		.092	.927
1. Employee empowerment	.271	.086	.246	3.137	.002
2. Career development	.196	.095	.194	2.068	.042

From the findings in Table 5, the constant 0.038 indicated that if employee empowerment, career development, leadership development and team building were all rated as zero, employee commitment would be 0.038. The analysis showed that employee empowerment has a positive and statistically significant effect on the employee commitment at KFS in Uasin Gishu county ($\beta = 0.271$; $p = 0.002$), career development also had a positive and statistically significant effect on employee commitment at KFS in Uasin Gishu county ($\beta = 0.196$, $p = 0.042$). Furthermore, leadership development also had positive and significant effect on the employee commitment at KFS in Uasin Gishu county ($\beta = 0.210$, $p = 0.009$).

$Y = 0.038 + 0.271X_1 + 0.196X_2$Eqn

Hypotheses Test Results

The study tested the hypotheses to determine the effect of independent variables (employee

empowerment, career development, leadership development and team building) on dependent variable (employee commitment).

H₀₁: Employee Empowerment has No Statistically Significant Effect on Employee Commitment at Kenya Forest Service.

From the results there was a statistically significant effect of employee empowerment on employee commitment at Kenya Forest Service ($\beta = 0.271$; $p = 0.002 < 0.05$). Thus, the study findings rejected the null Hypotheses. The findings concurred with the findings of Zaraket, Garios and Layla (2018) who their results reflected a positive relation between the components of employee empowerment and employee commitment. It implied that findings indicated that employee empowerment has a significant positive effect on employee commitment. The effect of teamwork on employee commitment was also found to be positive and statistically significant. Finally, the findings

confirmed that employee training has a significant positive effect on employee commitment.

H₀₂: Career Development has No Statistically Significant Effect on Employee Commitment at Kenya Forest Service.

Secondly, the null hypothesis that career development has no statistically significant effect on employee commitment at Kenya Forest Service was also tested. The findings indicated that career development contributes to 19.6 % of the service delivery at Moi university, Kenya ($\beta = 0.196$; $p < 0.05$) and the p value of 0.042 showed there exists significant effect between career development and employee commitment. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings agreed with findings of Abdul Hafid, Mahfudnurnajamuddin, Syahrir and Baharuddin (2017) who provides evidence that career development and employee culture proved can improve employee job satisfaction. The findings implied that better career development and leadership style, the higher the employee Commitment while employee culture and employee job satisfaction was not shown to improve employee commitment.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first objective of the study sought to determine the effect of employee empowerment on employee commitment at Kenya Forest Service. Descriptive results revealed that empowering the employees have the ability to use improve employee commitment. Sharing of information (send & receive) according to standard and they are abreast with the newer information technology developments. Further, majority of the respondents noted that they had been provided with training in order to improve on their service delivery. The study results show a significant level of employee empowerment. However, the results were also indicating that management still needs to address factors that are affecting productivity and quality levels. Correlation analysis showed that employee empowerment and employee commitment are positively and significantly associated. Regression analysis indicated that employee empowerment

has a positive and significant influence on employee commitment of Kenya forest service. The hypothesis results indicated that there is a positive significant relationship between employee empowerment and employee commitment.

The second objective of the study was to determine the effect of career development on employee commitment at Kenya Forest Service. Descriptive results indicated that organizations had a policy which governs career growth and development among its employees. Further, majority of the respondents noted that company has adopted the formal discussions about the career growth and development among its employees. Also, the organization provided incentives to staff for career achievement and effective training. Correlation analysis showed that career development and employee commitment performance of Kenya forest service are positively and significantly associated. Regression analysis indicated that career development has a positive and significant effect on employee commitment of Kenya forest. The hypothesis results indicated that there is a positive significant relationship between career development and employee commitment of Kenya forest service.

The study established that employee empowerment and career development influenced positively the employee commitment of Kenya forest service in Uasin Gishu County, and in line with this the study recommended the need for Kenya forest service to improve on their approaches of enhancing the talent development. In particular, the organizations should consider the rewarding the best employees, empowering the most performing employees, ensuring there is continuous team building ensuring the management commitment towards employees. The improvement of the employee empowerment will lead to improved employee commitment.

On career development, the organizations need to provide learning policies to the employees. The management need to focus on ensuring that they provide mechanism of rewarding the best employee

performers. Also, it's important to for the management of Kenya forest service to prioritize support to the employees. Good leaders must development best practices to that will ensure the careers growth of the employees. Also, in improving career development this study recommended that firms need improves technology and sustains long-term relations with its employees as this will affect

the commitment of the employee's performance in a positive way. The organization need to develop the approaches for career growth which encompasses career advancement and career development as a phenomenon has been a major concern to scholars, researchers, decision makers and human resources experts.

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