



## Employee Satisfaction and Retention in Kenyan Public Universities

Risper Wepukhulu

Senior Lecturer, Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy, School of Education, Kibabii University, Kenya

Sarah Likoko 

Lecturer, Department of Educational Planning & Management, School of Education, Kibabii University, Kenya

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### Abstract:

Retention of human resources is vital in companies and institutions whose financial sustainability and survival in a competitive environment are dependent on scarce human and specialist capabilities. The employee is the most important resource because of how much they contribute to the performance and success of the company. When talented employees leave an organization, they leave a hole that can be expensive to fill and difficult to manage, which undermines institutional performance. The research design used in the study was ex post facto. 430 non-teaching employees from 4

public Universities were chosen for the study using simple random sampling. A questionnaire with closed-ended (Likert type scale 1–5) items was used to gather the data. With the aid of descriptive statistics, the data was analyzed. According to the study's findings, more satisfied employees would have little intentions to quit.

**Keywords:** *Employee, Job, Retention, Turnover, Satisfaction.*

### Introduction

Employees are an organization's most valuable asset, therefore, retaining them in their positions is critical. Indeed, there is a paradigm shift from human resource to human capital, which comprises of the knowledge, skills, and talents of individuals employed in organizations and is indicative of their value (Armstrong, 2009). When employees leave their positions, it is typically an indication that something is amiss. According to Zhou et al. (2004), the costs of employee turnover, such as following recruiting costs and interruptions have an impact on service quality.

Employee turnover intention has been a worry for enterprises worldwide in today's dynamic, uncertain, and highly competitive global

marketplaces (Long & Thean, 2013). The cost of replacing an employee can be between 90% and 100% of their annual compensation (Wilson, 2012). The fundamental issue is that businesses frequently struggle to retain staff, which has a detrimental effect on their ability to operate effectively (Yongbeam, 2013). Organizations are learning that, as a result of a fiercely competitive market, it is getting harder not just to get top talent but also that they constantly run the risk of losing the ones they do have to rivals (Scullion, Collings, & Caligiuri, 2010). Furthermore, Sandhya and Kumar (2011) observe:

*“A talented employee will never fall shortage of the opportunities”* pg.42

As a result, the hardest problem that firms face is not just how to manage the staff, but also how



to keep them on the job for as long as possible (Kossivi, Xu, & Kalgora, 2016).

### Theoretical Framework

Job embeddedness theory served as the foundation for the current investigation. According to Birsal, et al., (2012), the job embeddedness construct was developed by Mitchell, Holtom, and Lee in 2001 and refers to the various factors that prevent an individual from quitting their job. According to Mitchell et al. (2001) and Yao *et al.* (2004), job embeddedness is a comprehensive concept that includes employee psychological, social, and economical factors on employee retention. Embedded figures are challenging to distinguish because they seem to be permanently linked to their backgrounds. These models claim that a person's view of their career options, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction all work together to predict an employee's intention to leave, and therefore, turnover.

In an effort to enhance conventional employee turnover models, Mitchell et al. (2001) initially proposed the concept of job embeddedness. Mitchell *et al.* (2001) proposed job embeddedness as an alternative model and included "off-the-job" factors (e.g., attachment to family) and other organizational factors (e.g., attachment to working groups) that have also been shown to affect employee retention but were not included in these traditional models. These scholars suggest that traditional models only modestly predict turnover.

According to the job embeddedness hypothesis, employees stick with a company as long as they are happy working there (Bawazir, 2013). Therefore, job embeddedness affects an employee's decision to stay with the organization or quit. According to Mitchell et al. (2001), employment embeddedness is like a net or web in which a person might get caught and become trapped. Those that are deeply ingrained have numerous, intricate connections inside the company and the community. Compared to others who have less contacts, these people are more likely to stay in their existing positions. As was already established, the initial conceptualization of job embeddedness

included three parts. According to Mitchell et al. (2001), their model takes into account three situational aspects, each of which is taken into account both on- and off-the-job.

Links, or how closely a person is connected to other people or activities, is the first of four situational aspects. For instance, institutional links are defined as official or informal relationships that develop between a member of academic staff and a company or group of colleagues as a result of that person's employment there (Mitchell et al., 2001). Social connections including those with coworkers, managers, and the number of teams or committees at work are examples of these interconnections. According to this hypothesis, a person is more likely to be reluctant to cut ties with their institution the more connections they have to it. The social ties one has with people who reside in their local area are known as community links. For instance, a person might have several family members who live close to their home or a group of friends with whom they meet together once a week. According to the hypothesis, it will be more difficult to break those relationships and leave the community the more connections one has within their community.

The second component, fit, refers to how comparable their jobs and communities are to or fit with the other aspects of their life spaces. Mitchell et al. (2001) describe organizational fit as "an employee's perceived compatibility or comfort with an institution." The higher the perceived congruence between an employee's knowledge, skills, and talents and those required by one's job, the more he or she senses organizational fit, according to job embeddedness theory. A degree of perceived congruence between one's own values and aims and those of the organization is also examined in organizational fit. The more the congruence, the stronger one's perception of fit with an organization.

For example, if an individual experiences a high degree of fit through promotion chances, he or she will become more attached to that

organization, making it more difficult to cut ties. Community fit is defined as a person's perceived fit with the community in which he or she lives. This comprises an employee's impression of fit with his or her community's culture, how well he or she appreciates the community's climate, and the available advantages that the community's geographical location has to offer (Mitchell et al., 2001). According to the job embeddedness theory, the better the congruence between one's aspirations and needs of his or her community and what the community actually has to give, the more likely one will wish to work there.

The third component is sacrifice, which refers to the ease with which linkages can be broken - what they would give up if they departed, particularly if they had to physically relocate to other towns or residences. Thus, organizational sacrifice is defined as the perceived cost of monetary or psychological gains lost by leaving a job (Mitchell et al., 2001). An employee who quits the University may have to give up treasured work relationships, a position in a job hierarchy, participation on work teams and committees, and benefits provided by the employee's organization. According to this notion, an employee who is considering quitting but does not want to give up valuable job-related advantages and social contacts is less likely to quit.

For example, if an employee leaves his or her town to take a position in a different geographical area, he or she may be forced to sell his or her home, leave a pleasant community, lose cherished social contacts, or forego a convenient work commute. If a person values the characteristics of the community in which he or she resides, he or she will be less willing to give up his or her place at a specific university. According to the job embeddedness idea, community sacrifice influences an employee's decision to leave or stay. To summarize, these aspects of a person's on- and off-the-job life create a contextual "web" that causes a person to get immersed in his or her company and community.

Job embeddedness theory was used in this study because of its uniqueness and can differ for each

person, based upon the time period of one's life, or one's life circumstances and because its multiple dimensions provide a broader-than-traditional view of what holds an employee to her or his position. JE was therefore modelled to determine whether the aspects of links, fit, and sacrifice work together to create an overarching collection of retaining forces that influence a non-teaching staff in Kenyan Public University to retain his/her job.

## Materials and Methods

### Research Design

When conducting studies, it is essential that researchers select the most appropriate method and design for investigating the presented problem (Wohlin & Aurum, 2015). Kerlinger and Lee (2000) note that the cardinal rule of planning any research study is that the research questions should dictate the research design. Since this study sought to explore the influence of employee satisfaction on job retention among the non-teaching staff in Universities, it was determined that an ex post facto study was the most appropriate research design to use in order to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses. Ex post facto is a research design in which, the independent variable or variables have already occurred and in which the researcher starts with the observation of the dependent variable or variables in retrospect for their possible relations to and effects on the dependent variable or variables (Patten, 2012).

### Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study's sample, which included all the 430 non-teaching employees from the four public Universities were selected for research. Simple random sampling method was used. An online questionnaire was used to collect data. The information gathered was strictly confidential.

## Results and Discussion

### Job Retention among the Non-Teaching Employees in Public Universities in Kenya

Staff retention was measured using intention to leave and intention to stay. The respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The scale of the study was adopted from the previous literature and published studies which research has repeatedly shown turnover intentions to be the best predictor of actual turnover (Liu&Onwuegbuzie,2012).

Thus, employees' behavior patterns of intention to leave their employers are the strongest

predictors of actual turnover (Christian & Ellis, 2014). Therefore, preventing future incidences of the academic staff quitting can be understood through examining turnover intention (Alshanbri *et al.*, 2015). Thus making the study of intention to quit more appropriate than actual turnover. In this regard, turnover intentions among the employees in the Universities was established to predict the actual turnover hence retention.

Therefore, respondents were asked to rate on the 5-point scale their level of agreement with five subjective indicators of their intent to leave their current jobs. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Turnover Intentions among the Non-Teaching Employees in Public Universities in Kenya**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\sum f_i w_i$	$\frac{\sum f_i w_i}{\sum f_i}$
I am actively looking for another job	88	95	79	67	47	1238	3.29
I would seriously consider leaving for even a slightly better position elsewhere	119	100	64	51	42	1331	3.54
I would seriously consider leaving my job for a position where I could earn more	153	81	34	60	50	1361	3.62
I feel trapped in my teaching job and I often think of quitting	70	77	71	80	78	1109	2.95

**Source:** Field Data (2023)

Table 1, depict that 114 employees representing (30.3%) of the respondents disagreed that they were actively looking for another job (score 4 and 5 on the scale) as compared to 183 representing 48.7% who agreed that they were actively looking for another job (scores 4 and 5 on the scale). With a weighted average of 3.29, the results show that more non-teaching employees were actively looking for another job.

With regard to whether the employees would seriously consider leaving for even a slightly better position elsewhere, 93 respondents representing 24.7% disagreed (score 1 and 2 on the scale) as compared to 219 representing 58.2% who agreed (scores 4 and 5 on the scale). With a weighted average of 3.54, the results

suggest that on the average, non-teaching employees in University agreed that they would seriously consider leaving for even a slightly better position elsewhere.

To answer the question on whether the employees in Universities would seriously consider leaving their jobs for a position where they could earn more, 110 respondents representing 29.3% disagreed (score 1 and 2 on the scale) as compared to 234 representing 62.2% who agreed (scores 4 and 5 on the scale). With a weighted average of 3.62, the results suggest that on the average, non-teaching employees in Universities agreed that they would seriously consider leaving their jobs for a position, where they could earn more

Table 1 shows responses on the non-teaching employees in Universities who feel trapped in their jobs but often think of quitting, 158 respondents representing 42.1%) disagreed (score 1 and 2 on the scale) as compared to 147 representing 39.1% who agreed (scores 4 and 5 on the scale). With a weighted average of 2.95, the results imply that despite having a strong will for their jobs, they often think of quitting.

Lastly, the ratings for each respondent were summed up to obtain an index which measured the turnover intent. The index ranged from 4 to 20. An index of more than 12 could imply high turnover intent while an index of less than 12 could construe low turnover intent among the non-teaching employees in University. The descriptive statistics for turnover intent are reported in the Table 2.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Turnover Intent Indices**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Turnover Internet	376	9.00	19.00	13.7287	2.14807

**Source:** Field Data (2023)

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the mean turnover intent was 13.7287 with a standard deviation 2.14807. In the range of 4 to 20 the mean turnover intention index is above the average of 12. This could imply that turnover intentions were high among the non-teaching employees in public Universities.

## Conclusion

The study concludes that there is a high level of dissatisfaction among non-teaching employees leading to low retention in Kenya's public Universities.

## Recommendations

In view of the study findings and the conclusions arrived at, the study recommended that, the commission for High Education should revise and develop a better scheme of service to reduce the desire of the non-teaching employees in the public Universities to switch to other competitive organizations.

## Conflict of interests

Authors declared no conflict of interest.

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