

# ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN COUNTY GOVERNMENTS WITHIN KENYA'S NORTH RIFT REGION

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose of Study:** This study sought to assess the influence of staff recruitment and selection practices on employee engagement in county governments within Kenya's North Rift Region. The study was underpinned by Social Exchange Theory.

**Problem Statement:** County governments in the North Rift Region face low employee engagement due to poor recruitment practices and limited staff development. Inadequate supervisory support and unclear expectations further contribute to high turnover and substandard service delivery.

**Methodology:** The target population comprised 10,009 employees working in three North Rift counties comprising of Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, and Nandi Counties. The target population was made up of 2,611 employees from Elgeyo Marakwet County, 3,164 employees from Uasin Gishu County, and 4,234 employees from Nandi County. Cluster and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the 385 employees. Regression analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between the variables. The results were presented using tables.

**Result:** The findings revealed that the model was significant in explaining the relationship between the independent variable and engagement ( $F = 142.299$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Regression analysis indicated that staff recruitment and selection was significant predictor of employee engagement ( $B = 0.188$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Recommendation:** In view of the findings, the study recommends that The County Governments in the North Rift Region should enhance recruitment and selection practices which is a priority for the human resource management.

**Keywords:** *Employee Engagement, Staff Recruitment, Selection Practices, County Governments, North Rift Region, Kenya*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In both public and private organizations, success goes beyond generating profits—it requires cultivating a work environment that empowers employees to perform at their best. Managing an organization effectively means not only focusing on financial outcomes but also prioritizing the people who drive its success: the employees. Having a well-defined set of Human Resource Practices in existence enables organizations accomplish this task with ease. Practices that are legally and ethically sound will yield greater results in business than attempting to manage personnel in a haphazard fashion (Martela, 2019). The best human resources practices construct the most effective and efficient method of accomplishing any objective or task for a business. When aligned with the corporation's mission statement and goals, these practices can address many of the personnel concerns that can come up for a business. It is far better when an organization is moving forward towards attaining goals as one unit while collectively working towards a communal goal and having a plan to get there (Soderstrom & Weber, 2020).

Human resource management relies on staff recruitment and selection to find and hire the best people for each job. Recruitment and selection of staff begins by identifying the job and determining what qualifications, skills and experience are required (Abbasi et al., 2022). When the job requirements are clear, the next thing to do is advertise the opening through job portals, social media and by asking for referrals. Interviewing is an important part of hiring because it allows the manager to judge a candidate's skills, experience and how well they would fit the job. All interviews should be planned, fair and objective and every candidate should be evaluated using the same standards. When the interviews have finished, the hiring manager starts choosing the best person for the job by considering their skills, experience and how well they fit the role (Zamsa, 2021). A company needs effective staff recruitment and selection to ensure it attracts and keeps the best employees. They allow the organization to hire people who are skilled, knowledgeable and experienced enough to do the job well and who fit in with the company's culture and values. As a result, staff turnover is reduced, employees become more productive and engaged and the organization achieves greater success (Albert, 2019).

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In Australia, Davis and Rhodes (2020) showed that there have been public sector reforms for more than 20 years. Entry into the public service was governed by entrance exams, followed by appeal systems and tenured employment. These reforms were mostly brought about by poor economic performance, information technology and the changing relationship between state and civil

society. By doing so, the public service was able to be more competitive and join international markets. In Germany, Human Resource Practices largely follow the German capitalistic model but allows for social policy, labour market interests as well as employment relations including collective bargaining. German employment relations are characterized by a high degree of specialization which puts the employee at the center of all organization activity (Keller & Kirsch, 2020).

Adonu et al. (2020) showed that in Ghana, Human resource practices are used not only to improve performance and employee engagement but to create business resilience from external shocks such as was seen during the Covid-19 pandemic. Dynamic HR systems enables organizations and public entities to continue providing services even in the phase of such crises. In South Africa, local governments have been characterized by a weak leadership talent mindset and poor application of Human Resource Practices such as talent development, performance management, talent retention and compensation. As such, most employees had a sense of dissatisfaction about their jobs leading to poor engagement and performance (Barkhuizen & Gumede, 2021).

Locally, parastatals have experience difficulties in achieving employee engagement and as such different approaches including transformational leadership have been adopted to seek to engage employees. In recent times, employee motivation as a Human Resource Management practices have recommended motivation as a way of improving employee engagement among government entities (Change et al., 2019). Moreover, county governments across Kenya had inadequate policy frameworks to support employee engagement hence the need for the study.

County governments in Kenya are a key part of the country's governance structure, which was put in place by the 2010 Constitution of Kenya to decentralize power and resources. Before this, Kenya had a centralized system of government where most decisions were made at the national level. The new system introduced 47 counties, each headed by an elected governor and county assembly. These local units have their own budgets, and they are responsible for a number of important services including health, education, transportation, and agriculture. This allows for better focus on local needs and challenges, as the county governments are more familiar with the specific issues their residents face. However, the devolved system has also faced challenges. Corruption and mismanagement of funds are still problems at the county level, just as they are at the national level (Auditor General, 2022). Additionally, there have been difficulties in making sure that the counties have enough money to provide all the services they are responsible for. This has led to debates over how revenue should be shared between the national and county governments. Another challenge is that the quality and availability of services can differ significantly from one county to another, leading to inequality. Despite these issues, many people believe that county governments have the potential to bring about positive change and are a step in the right direction for Kenya's governance. Despite these challenges, the North Rift counties are increasingly gaining attention for their potential in tourism, renewable energy, and as agricultural hubs, making them important players in Kenya's economic and social landscape.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The ideal situation would be one where county governments have implemented best practices in staff recruitment and selection, employee training, reward systems, and performance management, all of which are positively associated with high levels of employee engagement (Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013; Rana, Ardichvili, & Tkachenko, 2014). In this ideal scenario, the county governments would have robust and transparent staff recruitment and selection processes that

attract and retain talented individuals who are well-aligned with the organization's values and goals. The employee training programs would be comprehensive, providing opportunities for continuous learning and development, thereby enhancing employees' skills, knowledge, and abilities to contribute effectively to the organization (Anitha, 2014; Ghosh, Rai, Chauhan, Gupta, & Singh, 2016). Effective human resource (HR) practices and strong supervisor support are crucial elements in fostering employee engagement within county governments in the North Rift Region of Kenya.

However, the current reality often falls short of this goal. Research studies have highlighted several gaps and challenges in the implementation of effective HR practices and the provision of strong supervisor support within these county governments. For instance, a study by Kemboi, Biwott, and Chepkwony (2018) found that the staff recruitment and selection processes in some county governments in the North Rift Region were often not transparent, with nepotism and political influence playing a significant role in the hiring decisions. This can lead to a mismatch between the employees' skills and the job requirements, consequently undermining their engagement and performance (Nzulwa, 2014). Furthermore, studies have shown that the employee training and development programs in many county governments are often ad hoc, underfunded, and not aligned with the organizations' strategic goals (Kanyanja & Bwisa, 2018; Momanyi, Namusonge, & Oteki, 2016). This lack of investment in employee development can negatively impact their ability to perform their duties effectively and contribute to the overall success of the county governments. Similarly, research has revealed that the reward practices in some county governments are not competitive or equitable, with disparities in compensation and a lack of recognition for exceptional performance (Kipkebut, 2013; Njagi & Malel, 2012). This can lead to employee dissatisfaction, low morale, and ultimately, decreased engagement.

To address these issues and move closer to the ideal situation, the county governments should consider the following improvements: enhancing staff recruitment and selection processes (Nzulwa, 2014), investing in employee training and development (Kanyanja & Bwisa, 2018; Momanyi et al., 2016), implementing competitive and equitable reward practices (Kipkebut, 2013; Njagi & Malel, 2012), strengthening performance management systems (Momanyi et al., 2016; Nzulwa, 2014), and enhancing supervisor support (Kanyanja & Bwisa, 2018; Kipkebut, 2013). By addressing these gaps and implementing these improvements, the county governments in the North Rift Region of Kenya can enhance employee engagement, which in turn can lead to increased productivity, improved service delivery, and better overall organizational performance (Alfes et al., 2013; Anitha, 2014; Gruman & Saks, 2011).

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

How does staff recruitment and selection relate with engagement of employees among County Governments in North Rift Region, Kenya?

## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Staff recruitment and selection have no significant relationship with engagement of employees among county governments among County Governments in North Rift Region, Kenya.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study identified areas where HR practices falling short in promoting employee engagement. For example, if the study found that employees do not feel adequately supported in their professional development or do not receive sufficient feedback from their supervisors, the county

governments in the North Rift are able to use this information to make targeted improvements to its HR practices. Additionally, the findings of this study are important in helping the county governments in the region to better understand the factors that contribute to employee engagement, and how these factors may vary across different groups of employees. This study established that certain HR practices are particularly effective in promoting engagement among younger employees, while others are more effective for employees with longer tenures in the organization.

In addition to the benefits for the county governments in the region, this study has significant implications for employees themselves. By identifying which HR practices are most effective in promoting engagement, employees have more agency and control over their work experience. This leads to increased job satisfaction, a greater sense of empowerment, and ultimately, higher levels of engagement.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study was underpinned by Social Exchange Theory. SET is based on both sociology and social psychology and it explains how people interact by trading resources, whether they are physical or not. This theory suggests that people maintain relationships when they feel the positives are greater than the negatives. Basically, social connections are formed when both parties feel they are getting something valuable from the relationship. Rewards are the good things someone gets from a relationship and costs are the bad things they have to give up (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

The Social Exchange Theory was developed by George Homans, an American sociologist, in the 1950s. Homans believed that people decide to do what they think will most likely lead to the results they want and that their choices are influenced by what has happened to them and what others expect. According to Homans, people attempt to get the most rewards and pay the least costs in their social exchanges and the balance of these determines how good and how long a relationship will be (Cook et al., 2013). Other social psychologists and sociologists such as Peter Blau and Richard Emerson, have since contributed to the development of the theory since its introduction. Many social areas such as relationships between people, behavior in organizations and economic activities have been studied using this theory (Emerson, 1987). The Social Exchange Theory in general explains how individuals and groups interact and make decisions in social situations.

The Social Exchange Theory explains how relationships between people and groups work. It explains how people create and sustain relationships by exchanging rewards and costs with each other. According to the theory, people enter into social exchange relationships in order to maximize rewards and minimize costs and the balance of these factors determines how good and how long lasting a relationship will be (Lawler & Thye, 1999). Psychology, sociology and economics use the Social Exchange Theory. It has been used in the study of relationships between people, behavior in organizations and economic activities. The theory also points out that reciprocity is important in social exchange relationships. According to Lambe et al. (2001), it is that individuals are more willing to participate in social exchange relationships if they believe that their actions are returned.

Employee engagement is a social exchange between the employees and their organization and the Social Exchange Theory (SET) is important for the study. It explains how employees see the exchange of benefits and burdens they have with their organization. In this study, an organization may reward its employees with a feeling of accomplishment, chances of career advancement, fair pay and benefits and a good work environment. The expenses could be from heavy workloads, not being able to make decisions, not being trained or equipped well and little opportunity for career



growth.

The SET can be used to explain how employees view the balance between the rewards and costs of their relationship with their organization and how this impacts their level of engagement. For instance, if employees believe that the benefits of their relationship with the organization outweigh the costs, then they will probably be more engaged and committed to their work. Conversely, if employees perceive the costs of their relationship with the organization to exceed the rewards, then they will probably be less engaged in the organization and more likely to leave it. Besides, the SET highlights the need of reciprocity in social exchange relations.

Social Exchange Theory, as used in this study, points out that employees are more dedicated and involved when they feel the organization rewards them fairly for what they do. It helps understand how staff recruitment and selection influence engagement by examining if employees feel they are getting a fair and positive exchange from the organization. When staff think their work is recognized and rewarded, they tend to remain motivated and participate more. For this reason, SET provides a useful base for this research, showing how fairness in the workplace influences employee engagement.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

A study by Ahmed et al., (2020) noted that human resource managers are constantly concerned about whether or not employees are contributing to the goals of the organization especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study sought to determine the effect of staff recruitment on organizational performance with employee engagement as the mediating variable. The study used questionnaires and interview guides to collect data from employees and HR managers. The results of the study showed that conscious and specific staff recruitment processes helped to enhance performance by ensuring that the hired personnel were a right fit not only for their roles but as part of the organization as a whole. The study adopted employee engagement as a mediating variable and therefore constitute a conceptual gap. The current study addressed the gaps by investigating the effect of selected human resource practices, work environment on employee engagement among County Governments in North Rift Region, Kenya.

Organisational recruiting and selection processes, as well as the methodology used in them, were the focus of a study conducted by Hamza et al. (2021). Data was collected from telecommunication companies in Erbil-Kurdistan using a questionnaire in this quantitative analysis. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS. The 220 employees were the intended recipients. In this study, 80 employees served as the sample size. Research conducted in Erbil-Kurdistan on the topic of internal promotions in the telecommunications industry revealed no correlation between gender and race. In addition, most people who took the survey saw assessment centres, psychometric tests, interviews, resume reviews, references, and group interviews as crucial parts of the employment process. Despite these findings, the study reveals a conceptual gap, indicating a need for further exploration into other factors that may impact recruitment and promotion decisions beyond demographic variables and commonly used selection methods. The current study addressed the gaps by carrying out the study in County Governments in Kenya. While the study concentrated on application forms, assessment centres, psychometric tests, interview, CVs and reference groups, the current study filled the gap by looking at the job descriptions, channels of advertisements, recruitments processes and fairness in selection process.

A study by Mira, et al. (2019) sought to investigate the reason for poor performance among the cargo filed workers at the Saudi Ports Authority based on the effects of staff recruitment, social

support, job rewards, and employee engagement. The research, which used data collected from 367 workers at the Saudi Port Authority, established a robust and statistically significant correlation between HRM practices and worker productivity. It also found that when people are happy in their jobs, it shows up in their performance. The research did find that HRM practices were not significantly related to workers' happiness on the workplace. Furthermore, it found that in the connection between HRM practices and employee performance, work satisfaction was not a mediating factor. There is a conceptual void because employee performance, not employee engagement, was the dependent variable. To fill those gaps, the current study looked at how county governments in Kenya's North Rift Region dealt with employee engagement through HR procedures and supervisor assistance. As a moderating variable, supervisor support was utilised in the present investigation. The present study also surveyed county employees in Kenya, although the previous one had focused on port workers in Saudi Arabia.

A study by Grobelna (2019) sought to examine the effects of individual and job-related characteristics on the work engagement of employees. In particular, the study determined how staff recruitment practices affected employee engagement by testing the effect of positive affectivity, polychronicity and task significance on employees' work engagement and consequently on their performance. Structural equation modeling was used to collect data from 222 hotel employees in Northern Poland. The results established that positive affectivity and recruitment aligned with the task at hand positively and significantly impacted the work engagement of hotel employees. The study was conducted in Northern Poland and as such presents a contextual gap.

The purpose of the research by Munaty et al. (2022) was to look at how the selection, hiring, and training procedures affected the productivity of the staff. Using the Slovin formula for calculations, the study's simple random sampling procedure selected 44 respondents in total. The results of the t-test, which is a partial test, showed that training and employee selection were two factors that significantly affected employee performance in a good way. But there was a negative and statistically significant effect of recruiting on output. The results demonstrated that the three independent variables (recruitment, selection, and training) accounted for 98.6% of the variance in employee performance, with 11.4% attributable to other factors that were not considered. Improving the selection process can greatly boost employee performance, according to the study's findings, which point to a substantial positive association.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For this study, a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design is appropriate for this study as it enables the researcher to collect detailed information about the attitudes, perceptions, and views of the respondents regarding human resource management practices, the work environment, and employee engagement within the selected county governments (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). This design allows the researcher to gather data on the current state of the variables of interest at a specific point in time, without manipulating or controlling the research environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The cross-sectional nature of the design is suitable as it enables the researcher to collect data from the target population at a single point in time, rather than tracking changes over an extended period (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The target population included all the employees working with Elgeyo Marakwet Uasin Gishu and Nandi Counties. These counties have been selected because they have the largest population in among the North Rift Counties with the highest number of employees. As such the target population comprised 10,009 employees from the three counties made up of 2,611

employees from Elgeyo Marakwet County and 3,164 employees from Uasin Gishu County and 4,234 employees from Nandi County.

To ensure a representative sample of the target population, the study employed a combination of cluster and random sampling techniques. The first stage of the sampling process involved cluster sampling. The three county governments (Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, and Nandi) were considered as the clusters. Within each county, the various departments formed the subgroups or strata (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The second stage involved simple random sampling within each county (cluster). The researcher randomly selected respondents from the different departments (strata) in each county, ensuring that every employee has an equal chance of being included in the sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach enhanced the representativeness of the sample and minimizes potential bias. To determine the appropriate sample size, the study used Yamane's (1967) formula, which is widely used in similar cross-sectional survey research. In the current study, the sample size was determined through the employment of Yamane's (1967) formula as follows;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$n$  = sample

$N$  = population

$e$  = Level of  
precision (0.05) 1 =  
Constant

$$n=10,009 / (1+10,009 (0.05)^2) = 384.6 \approx 385$$

The primary data for this research was collected via the use of standardized questionnaires from the employees of the two County Governments. The questionnaires contained purely closed- ended questions designed in a Likert scale and had multiple sections. Quantitative analysis of data from the questionnaires was analyzed to provide descriptive and correlation statistics of demographic information and coded then the data was analyzed using descriptive categories such as central-tendency measures. A regression analysis was also conducted to establish the influence of human resource management practices on employee engagement. The data was analyzed using SPSS software. The particular inferential statistic was multiple regression modeling. To determine the overall model significance, the analysis of variance was examined. The coefficients of the equation were examined to determine how Human Resource practices affect employee engagement among County Governments in North Rift Region, Kenya. The significance of the different variables was assessed using a critical p value of 0.05. Graphs and tables were used to display the outcome of the results.

The study's chosen regression model is displayed as;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta X + e$$

Where;

$Y$  = Employee Engagement



X = Staff recruitment and selection

In the model,  $\beta_0$  = the constant term while the coefficient  $\beta$  was used to measure the sensitivity of the dependent variable (Y) to unit change in the predictor variable X. The error ( $\epsilon$ ) term captures the unexplained variations in the model.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The study administered a total of three hundred and eighty five (385) to the sampled respondents. Out of the 385 administered questionnaires, 337 were dully filled and returned, representing a response rate of 87.5%. The remaining 48 questionnaires constituting 12.5%, were unreturned. This high response rate of 87.5% suggests that the study realized a good representation of responses from the sampled respondents, providing a strong foundation for drawing conclusions from the collected data. Demographic results revealed that respondents (employees) consisted of 54.8% male and 45.2% female. These results imply a relatively balanced gender representation among the respondents, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis of the impact of human resource practices and supervisor support on employee engagement. The results showed that 12.5% of the employees were under 30 years, 39.7% were aged between 30-40 years, 31.6% were aged between 41-50 years, 10.9% were aged between 51-65 years, and 5.3% were over 65 years. These results imply a diverse age range among the employees within these counties. The predominance of respondents in the 30-40 years and 41-50 years age brackets suggests that most of the workforce is in their prime working years, which is likely to influence the effectiveness and reception of HR practices and supervisor support. Younger employees (<30 years) and older employees (>65 years) are likely to have different engagement needs and perspectives on HR practices compared to those in the middle age brackets.

The respondents' tenure at their respective county governments indicate that 36.9% had worked for up to 5 years, 44.6% had worked in their counties for above 5 years up to 10 years, and 18.5% had worked for above 10 years. These results indicate that the majority of the employees within these three counties have high level of experience working within their respective county governments, with 44.6% having 5 to 10 years of service and 18.5% having over 10 years. This suggests an experienced workforce. The significant number of newer employees (36.9% up to 5 years) shows the presence of fresh perspectives. The study findings also revealed that the highest level of education attained by the respondents was varied, with 41.2% holding degrees, 27.7% having diplomas, 9.6% possessing master's degrees, 4.8% holding PhDs, and 16.7% having other qualifications which were not disclosed.

### **Descriptive Statistics Analysis**

#### **Staff Recruitment and Selection**

The study aimed at finding out how staff recruitment and selection influence employee engagement in the selected County Governments in the North Rift Region, Kenya. Participants were asked to show their agreement or disagreement with statements about staff recruitment and selection. Table 1 presents the descriptive results.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Staff Recruitment and Selection**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
The staff recruitment and selection processes in my county government are transparent and merit-based.	6.40%	10.90%	0.00%	41.80%	40.90%	4.000	1.196
The recruitment and selection practices help attract talented individuals who are well-aligned with the organization's values and goals.	10.00%	9.10%	13.60%	35.50%	31.80%	3.700	1.282
The staff recruitment and selection processes ensure that new hires possess the necessary skills and qualifications for their roles.	8.20%	7.30%	12.70%	39.10%	32.70%	3.809	1.208
I am satisfied with the fairness and objectivity of the staff recruitment and selection procedures in my county government.	6.40%	9.10%	20.90%	30.90%	32.70%	3.745	1.192
The recruitment and selection practices in my county government contribute to enhancing employee engagement.	2.70%	7.30%	24.50%	40.90%	24.50%	3.773	0.992
The staff recruitment and selection processes are effective in identifying and retaining the best-suited candidates	7.30%	9.10%	30.00%	25.50%	28.20%	3.582	1.199
<b>Overall M</b>						<b>3.768</b>	

The results in Table 1 indicate that 82.7% of the participants believe that the recruitment and selection process in their county government is fair, open and based on merit. The data revealed that respondents mostly agreed, with only a slight difference in their opinions. Also, 67.3% of those surveyed thought that these methods help attract people who share the county's values and objectives. The overall agreement was shown by a mean of 3.700 and a SD of 1.282, even though there were some differences in the answers. Also, most respondents (71.8%) thought that the recruitment and selection processes guarantee that new employees have the skills and qualifications required for their jobs. The results showed a mean of 3.809 and a SD of 1.208, suggesting that respondents agreed moderately and their responses were spread around the M in a moderate way. Most respondents (63.6%) were satisfied with how fair and objective the staff recruitment and selection process was in their county government, as shown by a mean of 3.745 and a SD of 1.192.

The study also found that most respondents (65.4%) agreed that the recruitment and selection practices in their county government contribute to enhancing employee engagement. This statement had a mean and SD of 3.773 and 0.992, respectively, suggesting a general agreement and a relatively tighter spread around the M. Finally, the study found that most respondents

(53.7%) agreed that the staff recruitment and selection processes are effective in identifying and retaining the best-suited candidates, with a mean of 3.582 and a SD of 1.199. In general, the responses on staff recruitment and selection yielded an average M of 3.768, implying that the respondents were generally in agreement with the statements related to staff recruitment and selection.

### Employee Engagement

The dependent variable of the study was employee engagement. The respondents were requested to indicate their levels of agreement with the following statements on employee engagement and the descriptive results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Employee Engagement**

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
The physical workspace (e.g., office layout, comfort, cleanliness) supports my productivity and well-being	3.60%	9.10%	12.70%	50.00%	24.50%	3.827	1.021
I have a reasonable workload that allows me to maintain a healthy work-life balance	1.80%	8.20%	11.80%	42.70%	35.50%	4.018	0.986
The organizational culture promotes open communication, collaboration, and teamwork.	3.60%	11.80%	20.00%	36.40%	28.20%	3.736	1.106
I have access to career development opportunities and resources within the organization.	1.80%	14.50%	22.70%	30.00%	30.90%	3.736	1.106
Effective communication channels and feedback mechanisms are in place within the organization.	7.30%	24.50%	9.10%	43.60%	15.50%	3.355	1.216
The organization prioritizes employee well-being and provides support for physical and mental health	3.60%	13.60%	13.60%	40.90%	28.20%	3.764	1.116
<b>Overall Mean</b>						<b>3.739</b>	

Based on the results in Table 2, majority of respondents (74.5%) agreed that the physical workspace (e.g., office layout, comfort, cleanliness) supports their productivity and well-being. The responses had a mean of 3.827 and a standard deviation of 1.021, indicating a high level of agreement and a moderate spread of responses. This implies that the physical work environment in the county governments is generally perceived as supportive of employee productivity and well-being. The results also show that most respondents (78.2%) agreed that they have a reasonable workload that allows them to maintain a healthy work-life balance. The statement had a mean of 4.018 and a standard deviation of 0.986, suggesting a high level of agreement and a relatively lower spread of responses. This implies that workload management practices are effective in supporting employees' work-life balance, which is crucial for engagement.

Furthermore, a significant proportion of respondents (64.6%) agreed that the organizational culture

promotes open communication, collaboration, and teamwork. The responses yielded a mean of 3.736 and a standard deviation of 1.106, indicating a moderate to high level of agreement and a moderate spread of responses. This suggests that the organizational culture in the county governments is conducive to effective communication and teamwork. The results also show that a majority of respondents (60.9%) agreed that they have access to career development opportunities and resources within the organization, as depicted by a mean of 3.736 and a standard deviation of 1.106. This implies that the county governments provide adequate career development opportunities, which can enhance employee engagement.

However, a moderate proportion of respondents (59.1%) agreed that effective communication channels and feedback mechanisms are in place within the organization (Mean=3.355; Standard deviation=1.216). The relatively lower mean and higher standard deviation imply that while some employees perceive effective communication, others may not, indicating room for improvement in communication practices. Additionally, the study found that most respondents (69.1%) agreed that the organization prioritizes employee well-being and provides support for physical and mental health (Mean=3.764; Standard deviation=1.116). This implies that the county governments are effective in promoting employee well-being, which is important for maintaining high levels of engagement.

In general, the responses on employee engagement yielded an average mean and standard deviation of 3.739 and 1.092, respectively. This implies that the respondents generally agreed that various factors, such as physical workspace, workload management, organizational culture, career development opportunities, communication practices, and well-being support, positively impact employee engagement. However, there may be areas for improvement, particularly in enhancing communication channels and feedback mechanisms to ensure all employees feel effectively supported and engaged.

### Correlation Analysis Results

Correlation analysis was conducted to ascertain the association between employee reward practices and employee engagement among selected County Governments in the North Rift Region. Pearson correlation was used to test the following hypothesis. The results for the correlation in the study are as presented on Table 3.

**Table 3: Correlation Matrix**

		Employee Engagement	Staff Selection	Recruitment and
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
Staff Recruitment and Selection	Pearson Correlation	.631**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

*H<sub>0</sub>: Staff recruitment and selection have no significant relationship with engagement of employees among county governments among County Governments in North Rift Region, Kenya.*

The findings revealed a positive and significant correlation between recruitment practices and employee engagement ( $r=0.631$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study concluded that staff recruitment and selection have significant relationship with engagement of employees among county governments among county governments in North Rift Region, Kenya. The study concluded that staff recruitment and selection are highly correlated with employee engagement in the chosen county governments of the North Rift Region, Kenya. As a result, better staff recruitment and selection methods are linked to more engaged employees in the chosen County Governments. The results are in line with those of Katou and Budhwar (2021), who found that using strict and fair recruitment and selection methods improves employee engagement, satisfaction with their jobs and commitment to the organization in the public sector. Regression analysis results revealed that staff recruitment and selection significantly influenced employee engagement. Recruitment and selection had a statistically significant positive effect ( $B = 0.188$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that better recruitment and selection practices were associated with higher levels of employee engagement.

## **CONCLUSION**

Among the selected human resource practices that significantly influence employee engagement in the county governments of the North Rift Region, Kenya include staff recruitment and selection, employee training, employee reward practices and performance management practices as well as supervisor's support. The results show that these HR practices are important in promoting an engaged workforce which in turn improves organizational performance and service delivery in the county governments. The results indicate that the recruitment and selection of staff is important for bringing in and keeping talented people who fit with the company's values and objectives. These practices have a significant positive impact on employee engagement which implies that transparent, fair and merit-based recruitment processes are important in creating a committed and motivated workforce.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The County Governments in the North Rift Region should enhance recruitment and selection practices which is a priority for the Human Resource (HR) management. Considering the huge positive effect of transparent and merit based recruitment processes on employee engagement, HR should make sure that these processes are followed consistently. This includes the use of standardized tools and criteria to evaluate candidates, regular audits of recruitment practices to ensure fairness and objectivity and other similar actions. Recruitment strategies should be aligned with organizational goals to attract top talent and HR should invest in training hiring managers to conduct effective and unbiased interviews.

Policymakers should also promote the establishment of supervisor support programs to enhance the effectiveness of HR practices in fostering employee engagement. These programs should focus on training supervisors in leadership and communication skills, providing them with the tools and resources needed to support their teams effectively. Policies should also encourage regular supervisor training sessions, performance reviews, and feedback mechanisms to ensure that supervisors are meeting the support needs of their employees. Financial incentives or recognition programs for supervisors who demonstrate exceptional support could also be considered. The findings of this study contribute to the Human Capital Theory and Social Exchange Theory. The significant impact of recruitment, reward practices, and performance management on employee engagement supports the notion that investment in human capital is crucial for organizational



success. These findings should be integrated into existing theoretical frameworks to emphasize the practical applications of these HR practices. Theories should highlight the importance of transparent recruitment, fair reward systems, and effective performance management as key drivers of employee engagement and organizational performance.

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