

The Influence between Hiring Practices and Service Quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County Government

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Abstract

This study examined the influence between hiring practices and service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County Government, Kenya. An Explanatory research design approach was adopted. The study population consisted of 244 employees working in Elgeyo Marakwet County. A sample size of 152 respondents was selected using stratified, simple random sampling. The data was collected with the aid of a self-administered questionnaire. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS software. The hypothesis was tested using the hierarchical regression analysis technique. Hierarchical and multiple regression models were employed to analyze the obtained data and test the hypotheses, utilizing the Hayes Process macro-4.2. The study found that hiring practices ($\beta = .463, p < .001$) were a significant predictor of service quality. Therefore, the presence of hiring practices will lead to multiple positive outcomes for the county government, hence improving service quality. County governments should prioritize hiring practices as part of strategic human resource management to enhance service quality, specifically in Elgeyo-Marakwet County.

Keywords: Hiring Practices, Service Quality, Strategic Human Resource Management.

Introduction

Hiring Practices can be defined as actions an organization takes to attract potential candidates with the necessary skills for actual employment. Hiring is also a process of identifying candidate qualifications, attributes, and characteristics to determine their suitability for the advertised job. It means picking and choosing among the selected candidates. Hiring is critical to influencing organizational performance (Florea & Mihai, 2014). The underperformance of employees and the inability to cope with new challenges influence organizational productivity, so there is a positive relationship between proper hiring practices and organizational productivity (Ukpafe, 2014). Factors influencing the hiring process in governments are relevant experience, education, and salary requirements, which generally

determine who to hire in an organization (Okusolubo et al., 2016). Factors such as work experience, academic qualifications, interviews, and tests are used in selecting employees to determine effective hiring practices (Djabatey, 2012).

Reasonable and efficient Service Quality are prerequisites for enhancing the government's reputation in terms of good governance. The actual value of efficient Service Quality in shaping citizens' perception of the government is often underestimated. Service Quality is not a standalone concept but an integral part of the complex relationship among government, society, and citizens. As highlighted by Onyango (2015), for many citizens, the local government represents the most present form of governance they encounter and engage with daily. Abe and Monisola (2022) argued that the government is expected to provide top-notch services to its constituents.

They supply offerings including inflation control, better training, more advantageous health care at affordable costs, clean water provision, and shipping of actual road networks. Jacqui et al (2021) concluded that human service is complicated in Western societies, with intense societal and challenging expectations frequently brought underneath fiscal barriers. Specialization might imply that men or women provide companies or agencies to improve their know-how and offer precise service. However, people, households, and communities typically encounter numerous necessities and similar challenges.

The same awareness is behind network-pushed 'grassroots' applications that regularly provide ties to other clothing throughout much less diagnosed paths of alliances. Decentralization is considered an essential device in sales performance and, as a result, contributes to providing offerings nearer to human beings in extensive and closely populated economies, which include China, the US and a few ECU international locations via federal preparations (Clegg & Greg, 2020). Rosenbaum and Rodríguez (2021) report a global trend toward decentralization in governance. According to Winsemius and Guntram (2021), decentralization has brought up a new dimension to which many national governments have responded. Some have tolerance for opposing viewpoints and democracy, while others have just maintained their former positions. Zungura (2022) stated that with devolution, responsibilities were shifted to regionally manageable levels, which caused political balance and localized determinations, resulting in ideal settings to satisfy particular wants.

The US is one of the predominant examples of hit decentralization, with as many as 50 state governments and over 85,000 local authorities. This has brought full-of-life improvement desires being targeted using the states governing themselves and the federal authorities, which has led to service provision improvement (Rosenbaum & Rodríguez, 2021). In Malaysia, public region organizations must increase significantly and deepen the values of deserving governance regularly to produce remarkable green and influential services (Siddiquee, 2020). Siddiquee (2020) explained that the main obstacle to the productiveness and performance of service is labelled via numerous protests, including misuse of electricity, behind-schedule movements and improper behaviour of some of the personnel of the public carrier. Expectations from society within the public region to turn offerings in tune with citizen expectations have been considered, and they are shaky in growing international locations (Palladan et al., 2016). Public offerings in numerous African nations are plagued with problems limiting their delivery capabilities. Lienert (2018), these include human aid control elements related to personnel shortages in numbers and critical skills, loss of the correct mentality, and socio-psychological outlook. There are additionally constant hitches of a scarcity of monetary and material logistics, which can be vital to assisting powerful providers.

Domestically, decentralization has been successful in international locations along with Ghana, Tanzania, Mali, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda, Nigeria, and South Africa (Dickovick & Riedl, 2020). However, the effect of decentralization has numerous positives across countries in Africa. The correlation between decentralization and public provider transport within the scenario of Sub-Saharan Africa is rarely seen. Only a few studies have ever gauged its effect on provider quality inside the Sub-Saharan Africa framework (Tshukudu, 2018). Furthermore, there is asymmetry inside the emphasis that has vanished into studies on government decentralization and excellent service.

Boris (2018), inside the evaluation of the demanding situations confronting neighbourhood authorities in robust and efficient social service in Nigeria, installed that scarcity of price range, injustice and inappropriate influence in politics, among others, are the primary boundaries to exemplary services by local government Alornyeku (2021) finished a study in Kumasi city on administrative shape and carrier fine. The researcher thought that the assembly of low productiveness because of intense paperwork was undesirable and negatively impacted the performance of the relevant government. The take a look at, however, unsuccessfully considers devolved devices of governance.

Lankeu and Maket (2021), who have a look at civil carrier first-class in Kenya, pointed out that the civil service through the years has been described by bribery, low productivity, inadequacy, and absence of transparency and duty. However, a few studies have pointed out innovative results from decentralizing HR features Daly (2019); Cheruiyot and Kaswira (2021) estimate that there also are a few inherent difficulties in the context of decentralization that can cause excellent damage with constructive outcomes.

In a look at what was accomplished in Kajiado County, the researcher stated that the principal impairments to effective and green carrier quality are meddling and influence on politics, bribery and an absence of accountability, openness, limited citizen engagement, unjust human resource policy, malfunction in trade management, lack of employee competency, inadequate planning, and insufficient monitoring and assessment (Makanyeza et al., 2021). There also are indications that the fulfilment of devolution hinges on the development and execution of a framework for devolution. Additionally, county governments have confronted demanding ethical behaviour and accountability situations as they provide services to their parts.

Statement of the Problem

County governments in Kenya are expected to continuously find measures that can enable them to raise service delivery standards through practising appropriate Human Resource management practices like hiring practices to efficiently deliver Quality services like infrastructure development, water, electricity, efficient health services, and education services. Nevertheless, it has been evident that County governments in Kenya have been experiencing many problems, including but not limited to nepotism, mismanagement, inappropriate working environment, and critical appointments based on political referrals and affiliation (Collins & Druten, 2013). Since the inauguration of Public Service Boards in 2013, not much empirical evaluation of their Hiring as human Resource Management practice role in achieving quality service objectives has been attempted, and this has led to the little-known extent to which Human Resource Management agencies within the forty-seven (47) counties in Kenya have facilitated Hiring practice of staff for Quality service delivery. Research also indicates that over fifty-one per cent (51%) of citizens are dissatisfied with service delivery of essential services offered by Counties like infrastructure development, water,

electricity, and provision of health and education services (Transparency International, 2019). This indicates that there is a need for county governments to improve hiring practices as well as human resource management practices in relation to quality service delivery. County Governments have witnessed poor performance by successive governments due to weak governance of public institutions across the nation, and therefore, it is essential to improve this level of service delivery; in order to do so, there is a need first to investigate what is making the level of service delivery being unsatisfactory (Kerubo & Muturi, 2019)

Literature Review

The human capital theory is critical in assessing hiring practices. Human Capital Theory, proposed by Becker (2019) was adopted to understand the effect of hiring practices and Service quality. Becker (2020) asserts that current issues like the rise of globalization, an economic system based on knowledge, and technological innovation have allowed many governments and businesses to explore innovative strategies to maintain their competitive advantage. According to Kwon (2020), human capital can be characterized as the collection of workers' productive abilities and expertise. According to Maina and Kwasira (2018), the concept of human capital is a semantic blend of the words human and capital. In conjunction with the definition of capital from the context of economics, humans are considered to take the helm of every aspect of economics, such as manufacturing, consumption, and exchanges. HRM is concerned with attracting, keeping, and nurturing human resources (Armstrong, 2018). Human capital can be characterized as an individual's time and energy, knowledge, expertise, and capabilities that are capable of being utilized during production perpetually (Heckman, 2000). According to Armstrong (2021), people develop, preserve, and apply understanding and abilities. to produce intellectual capital. Their knowledge is enriched through training and interactions among themselves, resulting in the accumulation of additional knowledge within an organization. In the scope of this research, it is undeniably the knowledge, skills, and competencies of individuals that generate value, underscoring the importance of strategies for recruiting, retaining, nurturing, and sustaining the human capital they embody. The Human Capital Theory, which maintains that workers have the necessary knowledge, abilities, and skills to perform exceptional public service, applies to the current study. Choosing to add a public servant to the County Public Service workforce simply means adding to the human capital pool. Because it shows how these HRMPs and service quality interact, the framework thus offers a great starting point for understanding the Strategic Human Resource Management Practices (HRMP) that are now in place. Hitt, Ireland, Camp, and Sexton (2018) state that human capital in HRM is pertinent since corporate performance is determined by the amount of human capital.

This theory posits that individuals possess inherent abilities, behaviours, and personal energy, which collectively constitute their human capital (Davenport, 2020). According to this theory, value is created by individuals' expertise, abilities, and gifts. Consequently, the emphasis should be on recruiting, keeping, and nurturing talent human capital. Armstrong (2020) asserts that individuals gain, retain, and utilize knowledge, creating intellectual capital. Furthermore, the interactions between individuals, known as social capital, enhance their knowledge and generate institutionalized knowledge within organizations. Human capital theory views people as valuable assets, and organizations that invest in their people enhance their performance, ultimately yielding positive outcomes for the organization (Armstrong, 2020).

Block (1990), on the reverse, challenges the premise of Human Capital Theory, alleging that it refuses to adequately comprehend how people act above perceiving it as the interchange of commodities. This theory's conceptualization of capital is solely quantitative, ignoring the fact that capital is a self-sufficient social element that produces value through aggregation. From this standpoint, human capital is a hypothetical type of labour, a commodity, as opposed to real-life capital. Another criticism suggests that education enhances productivity, which could explain higher wages. However, this perspective needs to consider the learning transfer. Does the time taken for education and training directly correlate with increased productivity? Higher productivity alone does not necessarily lead to higher wages. Numerous other factors, such as industry, regional disparities, organizational policies, and union regulations, can influence the wage system (Denver, 2020).

According to Armstrong (2020), human capital theory treats employees as property, and firms that spend on employees optimize employee performance, ultimately leading to efficient service quality and favourable returns for the organization. Block (2020) contends that Human Capital Theory is a flawed understanding of capital. It can only interpret human activity as the exchange of commodities, and the concept of capital employed is strictly quantitative. The hypothesis confirms that individuals' expertise, talents, and skills yield value. Consequently, the focus must be on how to lure, choose, keep, and grow human capital. This study finds it a functional theoretical viewpoint through which to evaluate what exists between Hiring, employee engagement initiatives, competency development, and performance evaluation practices on service quality in county governments in Kenya.

The gap in this study is evident in the scant exploration of alternative viewpoints or critiques of Human Capital Theory, especially those challenging its characterization of human activity as a mere exchange of commodities and its reliance on a quantitative interpretation of capital (Block, 2020). Furthermore, a more nuanced examination is required to encompass factors influencing productivity and wages beyond education and training, including industry nuances, regional disparities, organizational policies, and the influence of unions, for a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of hiring practices on service quality in Kenyan County governments.

Results and Findings

Response Rate

One hundred and fifty-two (152) questionnaires were distributed, filled and returned. This gave a response rate of 100.0 per cent. This response rate is an excellent representative and conforms to Mugenda and Mugenda's (2018) stipulation that a response rate of 50 per cent and above is adequate for analysis and reporting; a rate of 60 per cent is reasonable, while a response rate of 70 per cent and over is excellent. Based on this assertion, the response rate of 100.0 per cent was, therefore, ideal.

Table 1

Response Rate of Questionnaire

Response	No. of Questionnaires	Percentage (%)
Usable responses	152	100%
Non-responses	0	0%
Total	152	100%

Source: Research Data (2024)

Correlation Findings

Hiring practices were positively and significantly correlated to service quality [$r = 0.643$, $\rho < 0.01$ ($p=0.00$)], implying that hiring practices are expected to influence service quality by $(0.643^2) = 35.7\%$ based on the coefficient of determination; hence it was suitable in predicting service quality. The results in Table 2 conform to the findings of a 2020 meta-analysis by Chen et al. (2020). which investigated the relationship between various selection procedures (e.g., structured interviews and work simulations) and customer loyalty. Their findings suggested combining these methods led to higher customer loyalty, implying a connection between hiring practices and service quality.

Table 2

Correlation Results

N=152	Service Quality	ρ -Value
Hiring Practices	.643**	0.00

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

Source: Research Data (2024)

Regression Results

The study results reported a positive and significant effect between hiring practices and service quality ($\beta = .463$, $\rho = 0.000$, $\rho < .05$). Generally, these findings suggest embracing hiring practices in county governments, specifically in Elgeyo-Marakwet County. This suggests that a critical factor influencing the calibre of services is hiring procedures. The findings indicate that a .463 improvement in service quality is correlated with every unit increase in hiring procedures. Consequently, as indicated in Table 3, we accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. Hiring procedures and service quality are closely related, which is crucial for businesses in all industries. The people it hires - their skills, qualifications, and fit with the organization directly impact the company's quality of service. Effective Hiring can improve service quality, customer satisfaction, and business performance. Thus, service quality varies based on the type of hiring practices used. The data supports the hypothesis that hiring practices and service quality are significantly related.

Table 3

Regression Analysis for Hiring Practices On Service Quality

	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B		Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	.829(.332)			2.498	.014
Predictor Variables					
Hiring Practices	.463(.095)		.459	4.877	.000
Model Summary					
R	.662 ^a				
R Square	.439				
Adjusted R Square	.423				
F Change	28.721**				

^a Dependent Variable: Service Quality

*Note: N= 317, Level of significance, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Standard errors are given in parentheses. From the table above, all numbers are rounded to three decimal places*

Source: Research Data (2024)

The results depicted that hiring practices accounted for approximately 46.3% of the overall variance in service quality ($R^2 = .439$, Adjusted $R^2 = .423$). In addition, the ANOVA method showed that the combined estimation of the independent variable (service quality), as shown in Table 3 above, was statistically significant [$F = 28.721$, $p < 0.01$ ($p = 0.00$)]. The model was thus fit to predict service quality through hiring practices. To test the research model's suitability, the distribution F-statistic test was used, using the following two testable hypotheses:

H0: The model is inappropriate when the independent variables do not affect the dependent variables.

H1: The model is appropriate when the independent variables affect the dependent variables.

Study findings in ANOVA Table 3 indicated that the above-discussed coefficient of determination was significant as evidenced by (Sig. F) ratio of 28.721 with p value $0.000 < 0.01$ (level of significance). The study accepted the alternative one, so the models used were appropriate. The hypothesis predicted that hiring practices have no significant effect on service quality. However, the results presented in Table 3 above showed a positive and significant association between hiring practices and service quality [$\beta = .463$, $p < 0.05$ ($p = 0.00$)]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, the study concludes that hiring practices influence service quality positively. Essentially, the more a county government adopts or engages in hiring practices as a component of strategic human resource management, the more they contribute to influencing service quality. This implies that service quality in Elgeyo-Marakwet County is positively associated with hiring practices. The study's results are consistent with a study by Smith et al. (2020), who found that organizations that use targeted recruitment strategies tailored to specific job roles tend to hire employees better suited for their positions. This alignment between job requirements and employee skills can improve service quality.

Conclusion

The study aimed to evaluate the effect of hiring practices on service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The findings show that hiring practices positively influence service quality. From this understanding, County governments should be able to recognize that the kind of people hired by the organization play a vital part in providing customer service. The quality of hire, or how important an employee is to a business, can immediately affect the level of service delivered to consumers. Hiring policies substantially impact service quality by shaping the capabilities, attitudes, and behaviours of workers who work directly with customers. County governments can raise service standards and differentiate themselves in competitive markets by prioritizing recruitment tactics focusing on staff competency, cultural alignment, training programs, engagement levels, and overall customer perception.

Recommendation

Since the study findings showed that hiring practices significantly influence service quality, different hiring methods should be adopted. Hiring policies substantially impact service quality because they shape the capabilities, attitudes, and behaviours of workers who work directly with customers. County governments can raise service standards and differentiate

themselves in competitive markets by prioritizing recruitment tactics focusing on staff competency, cultural alignment, training programs, engagement levels, and overall customer perception.

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