

Meeting Diverse Workforce Expectations on Career Development and its effect on Employees' Commitment in Public Universities in Kenya

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Abstract

Career development initiatives benefit both employees and the organization they work in. Employees benefit from improved, more marketable skills that allow for increased mobility within the organization while the organisations benefit from increased employee talent, performance and commitment and reduce employee intention to leave for alternative employers. The study aimed to determine the effect of meeting diverse workforce expectations on employee commitment in public universities in Kenya. Perceived organization support was considered a moderating variable in the study. Employees' commitment to the organization was the dependent variable. The study focused on the effect of career management on employees' commitment in public universities in Kenya for both academic and non-academic.

This was a field study that adopted a cross sectional descriptive research. The data analysis was both descriptive and inferential. To obtain a comprehensive view of the career development expectations of the diverse workforce situation in public universities, qualitative research methods was applied in the study. The target population was the University of Nairobi (UoN), Kenyatta University (KU) and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). The three institutions were a good representation since they have more established systems unlike other upcoming universities. Questionnaires and interviewer-administered questionnaire were used as instruments for obtaining the information required. Pilot test was conducted to detect any weakness in design and instrumentation, and Cronbach's Alpha and T-test was used to ascertain internal reliability of each variable used in the study. The results combined provided a better insight into the effect meeting diverse

workforce career development expectations on employees' commitment in public universities in Kenya.

Keywords: Career Development, Diversity, Diverse Workforce, Employee Commitment

Introduction

Leibowitz and Lea as cited by Jane and Nadya, (2009) describe career development systems as integrated services and procedures which meet the needs of both individuals and organizations. Services meeting individual needs are referred to as career planning while those related to organizational needs are termed career management.

Career development has been identified as a means of helping organizations to tap into their wealth of in-house talent for staffing and promotion by matching the skills, experience and aspirations of individuals to the needs of the organization (Kapel and Shepherd, 2004; Kaye, 2005). Extensive research has been carried out in a bid to unearth the extent to which organizations can support career development initiatives for their employees. Such research has focused on the extent to which such practices foster organizational effectiveness (Appelbaum, Ayre & Shapiro, (2002) and result in job satisfaction among employees. Other scholars have focused on the extent to which such practices encourage employee commitment (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007).

Diversity may be defined as the presence of differences among members of a social unit. (Jackson et al, 1995). Diversity is an increasingly important factor in an organizational life as organisations worldwide become more diverse in terms of the gender, race, ethnicity, age, national origin and other personal characteristics of their members. (Shaw and Barret-Power, 1998). Today, the workforce comprise people who are different and share different attitudes, needs, desires, value, and work behaviors (Deluca and McDowell,1992; Morrion, 1992; Rosen and Lovelace, 1991).

As the workforce increasingly matures, retaining employees with critical skills, creating career paths to help senior employees break out of career plateau, and retaining senior employees whose skills have become outdated and require further development, will pose special challenges for organisations. Yet, few organisations, large or small, have policies in place to capitalise on the advantages of not only hiring but also retaining (and retraining) older workers. Traditionally, training within organisations has been directed at the youngest employees and focused heavily on the induction period and the early career of employees. Beaver and Hutchings (2005).

According to McBride and Bostian (as cited by Velma 2008), attention to diversity increases employee satisfaction and loyalty. Companies with good track records of equitable opportunities will find it easier to recruit and retain talented women and ethnic minorities, who prefer to work where they can expect to advance (LDI, 2002; Catalyst, 2001; Larson, 2002).

Objective of the study

The study sought to establish the effect of meeting diverse workforce career development expectations on employees' commitment in public universities on Kenya.

Scope of the study

This study will cover the public universities in Nairobi and Kiambu counties namely University of Nairobi (UoN), Kenyatta University (KU) and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). The three institutions have high staff establishments and well developed

systems and having been in operation for more than twenty years will provide a good representation of public universities in Kenya. The study will target both the teaching and the non-teaching staff in the public universities.

Literature Review

Diversity may be defined as the presence of differences among members of a social unit. (Jackson et al, 1995). Diversity is an increasingly important factor in an organizational life as organisations worldwide become more diverse in terms of the gender, race, ethnicity, age, national origin and other personal characteristics of their members. (Shaw and Barret-Power, 1998). Today, the workforce comprise people who are different and share different attitudes, needs, desires, value, and work behaviors (Deluca and McDowell, 1992; Morrion, 1992; Rosen and Lovelace, 1991).

Demographics, competition for talent, marketplace demands, and the changing environment have all generated great diversity in organizational workforces. Workforce includes (and treats equally) men and women; employees with differing ethnic backgrounds; young and older workers; physically challenged employees, and other workers who differ from the dominant group, male employees. By bringing a greater pool of talent to the workplace, diversity often results in better decision- making, an increased understanding of customers' needs, and a greater staffing ability (Gordon, 2011).

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As the workforce increasingly matures, retaining employees with critical skills, creating career paths to help senior employees break out of career plateau, and retaining senior employees whose skills have become outdated and require further development, will pose special challenges for organisations. Yet, few organisations, large or small, have policies in place to capitalise on the advantages of not only hiring but also retaining (and retraining) older workers. Traditionally, training within organisations has been directed at the youngest employees and focused heavily on the induction period and the early career of employees. Beaver and Hutchings (2005).

Age-mates in a work setup identify with each other as in-group members, while others outside of the group recognize them as a distinct generation. Thus, individuals from a respective generation can be differentiated from members of other generations not only by shared birth years, but also by unique social and historical experiences of the members, which permanently influenced their characteristics. (Sullivan *et al*, 2009). The four major generations of the twentieth century that have thus been studied are: the Greatest Generation, born between 1922 and 1945; the Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964; the Generation X (Xers), born between 1965 and 1983; and the Generation Y (hereinafter Yers), born between 1984 and 2002 (Alwin and McCammon, 2007; Biggs 2007, Kopperschmidst, 2000).

Boomers value extrinsic measures of career success and are willing to work long hours to obtain rewards. Boomers appreciate the value of working well in teams to achieve goals. Unlike the Boomers who seem to live to work, it is said that Generation X work to live. Generation X are greatly influenced by the financial, family and societal insecurities that dominated their childhoods. The downsizing of their Boomer parents in the 1980s and 1990s

caused Generation X to be distrustful of organizations that lack solid traditions but are accustomed to rapid change. They are highly mobile; they are more loyal to work-groups and bosses than firms. They dislike hierarchy, believe rewards should be based on merit as opposed to seniority, prefer to work alone, and prefer informal work arrangements. Generation X have also been dubbed the Slacker Generation because they place a lesser emphasis on work as an important part of their lives, especially in comparison to their Boomer parents (Hankin, 2004; McDonald and Hite, 2008).

Generation Y cannot remember a time when they were not connected 24/7. They are considered to be the most technologically adept members of the workforce. Their reliance on fast-paced technology, however, often makes them seem impatient (Hankin, 2004; Teriesen *et al*,2007).

For the first time in modern history, members from four generations are in the workforce. In 2007, approximately 9% of the workforce were members of the Greatest Generation, 32% were Boomers, 45% were Generation X, and 14% were Generation Y (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). Although over the last five decades scholars have examined generational conflicts at both the micro level, such as between parents of one generation and children of another, and at the macro level, such as generational clashes over social and economic issues including social security and health care policies (Alwin and McCammon, 2007; Biggs 2007), organizational scholars have just begun to study how generational differences may impact the workplace (Smola and Sutton, 2002).

Ho₁: Meeting diverse workforce career development expectations has no significant effect on employees’ commitment in public universities in Kenya.

A conceptual frame work was developed in order to understand the relationship of the variable.

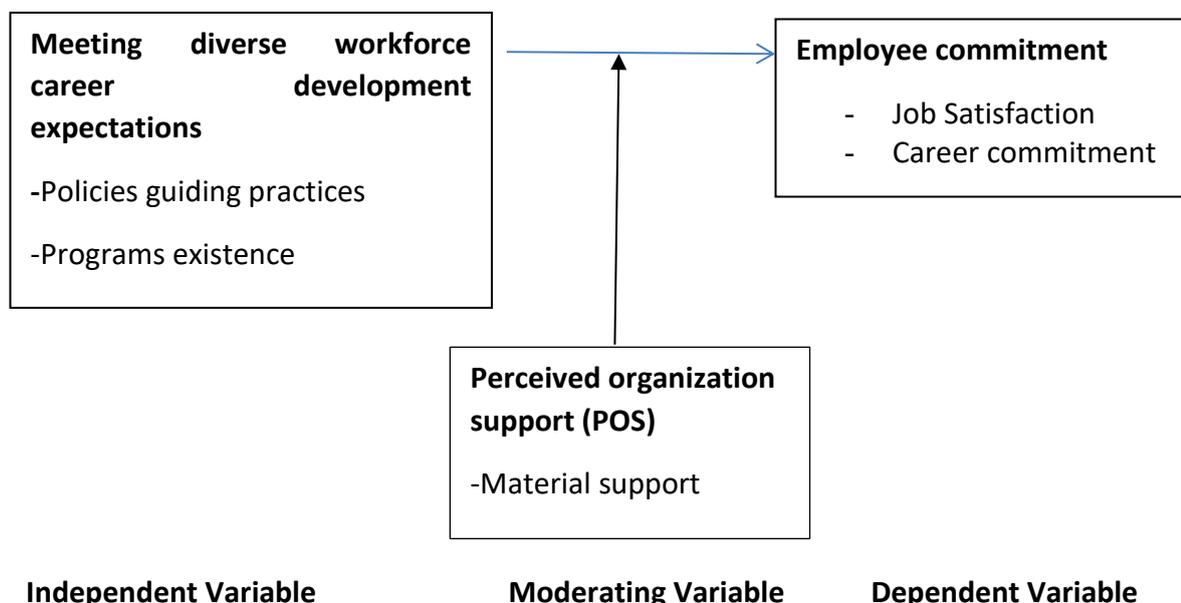


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Perceived Organizational Support

The central contrast within organizational support theory (OST), perceived organization support refers to the degree to which employees believe the organization values their work and contribution, and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger *et al*, 1986). Supportive leader behaviours and a generally facilitative organizational climate may be subsumed under a variable entitled 'perceived organizational support.' Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) demonstrated that individuals tend to "form global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being". Specifically, individuals evaluate the behavior of organizational agents towards them and infer the general motive underlying that treatment, with the categories that are considered important varying considerably between organizations and between persons. Some individuals might base their sense of perceived organizational support (POS) upon such factors as the organization willingness to provide them with special assistance or special equipment in order to complete a project. Others might develop a strong sense of POS based upon the organization members' willingness to provide them with additional opportunities for training in an area that is of particular interest to them.

According to Champan (as cited in Kopp, 2013), support can be divided into two broad categories: material and psychosocial. Material support includes money, equipment, supplies and the physical environment. Psychosocial support is primarily in terms of expert cognitive advice from the manager. Such structure helps the work group to do the job and share responsibilities (Straub, 2012).

Ho₂: Perceived Organization support (POS) has no moderating effect of on the relationship between meeting diverse workforce career development expectations and employees' commitment in public universities.

Employee Commitment to Organisation

Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) defined commitment as a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets, adding that commitment is distinguishable from exchange-based forms of motivation and target-relevant attitudes, and can influence behavior even in the absence of extrinsic motivation or positive attitudes.

Career commitment is an outcome of career development initiatives. Hall (1971) defines career commitment as the strength of one's motivation to work in a chosen career role (Noordin, Williams & Zimmer 2002). Colarelli and Bishop (1990) contend that career commitment is characterised by the development of personal career goals, the attachment to, identification with, and involvement in those goals. Organisations that provide career relevant information and assistance will narrow employees' career focus and bind them more closely to their employer leading to commitment (Granrose & Portwood 1987).

Organisations that invest in career management are more likely to increase employee's job satisfaction (Lee 2000). A number of researchers who provided alternative views of job satisfaction have appreciated this notion. First, numerous authors describe job satisfaction as a state of mind and provide different interpretations. For instance, Gregson (1987) defines job satisfaction as the positive emotional state resulting from the individual appraisal of one's job or experience. Chay and Bruvold (2003) define job satisfaction as an individual's affective response to specific aspects of the job. Noe, as cited by Belinda (2007) defines it as a pleasurable feeling that results from the perception that one's job fulfils or allows for the fulfilment of one's important job values (Appelbaum, *et al*. 2002).

Secondly, Wiener as cited by Meyer *et al* (2002), job satisfaction is a form of attitude towards work-related conditions, facets or aspects. Jepsen and Sheu (2003) observe that such an attitude, either in the form of liking, or disliking a job is a universal and an essential aspect of career development.

Research Design

This was a field study that adopted a cross-sectional survey research. Cross-sectional research is a research method often used in social sciences and education. This type of study utilizes different groups of people who differ in the variable of interest, but share other characteristics such as socioeconomic status and educational background. Cross-sectional studies are observational in nature and are known as descriptive research, not causal or relational (Kothari, 2004).

The research was a cross-sectional survey study geared towards describing the characteristics of the study population, in this case to shed more light on the effects of meeting diverse workforce career development expectations and its effect on employees' commitment in public universities in Kenya.

Population

According to Mugenda and Mugenda, (2008), a population contains the total subjects that can be considered in a study. The target population in this study was the 22 public chartered universities in Kenya, which have a population of approximately 24,000 employees (KUSU, 2014). The population was all the teaching and non-teaching staff and this population will be stratified using the two strata.

Sampling Frame

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2008), a sampling frame is a list, directory or index of cases from which a sample can be selected. Subjects or cases selected from the sampling frame form the units of observation in a study. Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) define a sampling frame as a list of all the items from where a representative sample is drawn for the purpose of a study.

In the case of this study, the sample frame of the study is the list of the 22 public universities in Kenya (CUE, 2014), taking a sample of 3 (three) public universities which is 10% representation of all public universities. Kerlinger (2006) stated that the smaller the sample, the larger the sampling error, and vice versa. Kerlinger (2006) indicates that a sample size, 10% of the target population is large enough so long as it allows for reliable data analysis by cross tabulation, provides desired level of accuracy in estimates of the large population, and allows testing for significance of differences between estimates.

The target population was the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, which have a total staff population of 10,257. These three universities have the bulk of the university staff population, and have more established systems unlike other upcoming universities.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Simple stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample from the academic and non-academic staff. Cooper and Schindler (2008) talk of stratified method as a technique used where the population is not homogeneous. This was considering that the universities employees are on two main categories; teaching and non-teaching staff.

The following formula was used to determine the sample size. (Kothari, 2008)

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05 \times 0.05} = 385$$

n = the desired sample size

z = the standard normal deviate at required confidence level

P = the population proportion estimated to have characteristics being measured

q = 1 – p

e = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (0.05)

A representative sample constituted a total of 385 which represented opinion of 10,257 staff members in the three universities. Stratified sampling was used to group the employees into two categories of teaching and non-teaching staff for representation. In this study, 500 questionnaires were taken to the field to give an allowance for those who may not respond. Out of the 500 questionnaires distributed, four hundred and forty one (441) were received back.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

The researcher used closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires and interviewer administered questionnaire as instruments of data collection. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the various selected respondents, targeting to have a representation of various cadres of staff in public universities. In the cases where the respondents requested to be given more time the questionnaires was collected at a later date.

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis

Qualitative data: Data frequency distribution and cross tabulation was used in describing and explaining the situation as it is in the public universities. Data was coded and analyzed simultaneously as collected. Through content coding, a list of key ideas and themes for each variable were generated, and this guided the nature of integration needed for both qualitative and quantitative data collected.

Data was then be operationalized through scoring for cross-checking with the quantitative data.

Quantitative data: Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics; measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion and measures of symmetry and inferential statistics. Scatter plots were used to show if the relationships are linear. SPSS software was used as a statistical tool for analysis.

Linear regression analysis was used to show if there was a correlation and strength of the relationship between variables both independent and dependent and the effect of the moderating variables on each relationship. Multiple regression analysis was thereafter conducted to test the overall effect on the study model. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also be used to test the goodness of fit of the regression models and finally to test the hypothesis of the multiple regression models. T-test was used to test the significance of model parametres.

Statistical Analysis of the study variables

The objective of the study was to establish the effect of meeting diverse workforce career development expectations on employee commitment in public universities in Kenya. The descriptive statistics showed that, 51.5% of the respondents agreed that public universities have policies and programs that cater for the changing demographic profiles of the employees. However this leaves a huge percentage 48.5% that disagreed that such programs and policies exist. This infers that employees are not conversant with the policies and programs that exist since they are not clearly communicated. 67.4% did not agree that the public universities have formal and informal mentoring programs for the workforce aged 46 years and above. 58.9% of the respondents did not agree that the university had formal and informal programs for the younger workforce. According to Netto and Sohal (1999) managing diversity expectations includes a process of creating and maintaining an environment that allows all individuals to reach their full potential by creating policies and drafting practices that get the best from every employee. 55.7% of the respondents agreed that public university encourages network and support groups and potential skill building advancement opportunities for persons living with disabilities. 72.3% of the respondents agreed that the public universities have equal career development opportunities for both male and female employees. 52.9% of the respondents agreed that university diverse workforce have clear career paths that could allow them to get to the top of the ladder in their careers. 53.9% of the respondents agreed that the public universities have flexible benefits that address broad range of employees work and family needs. 51.9% of the respondents did not agree that their career expectations are met in public universities.

Correlation analysis results for the study variables

Correlation analysis was conducted to show that relationship between the variables under study. Table I below shows the correlation results of the variables.

Table I:
Correlation Matrix

		Employee Commitment	Perceived Support
Employee Commitment	Pearson		
	Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Meeting diverse workforce career development expectations	N	429	
	Pearson		
	Correlation	.588**	.700**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0
	N	428	430

The correlation matrix showed the Pearson's correlation coefficient of between the dependent variable employee commitment and meeting diverse workforce career development expectations to be significantly correlated at ($r=0.588$, $p<0.001$). The correlation between meeting diverse workforce career development expectations and the moderating variable, perceived organization support was ($r=0.700$, $p<0.001$).

Statistical Modeling**Regression Analysis**

The following formula for regression model was used to analyse the relationship.

Regression model

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y= Employee commitment in public universities

X_1 - Meeting diverse workforce career development expectations

β_0 -is a constant (Coefficient of intercepts)

$\beta_1 - \beta_2$ - are regression coefficient

ε - is a random error term

Anova test was also conducted to determine whether the model worked in explaining the relationship among the variables as postulated in the conceptual model.

Regression results of diverse workforce career development expectations on employee commitment

Table II:

Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.588 ^a	0.346	0.345	16.95097

a. Predictors: (Constant), Meeting Expectations

Table II present a summary of regression model result. The regression results showed that (R =0.588) and (R squared = 0.346) respectively. From the findings shown in table 2, it is notable that there exists a relationship between the study variables.

Table III:

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	64233.9	1	64233.921	223.55	.000 ^a
	Residual	121255	422	287.335		
	Total	185489	423			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Meeting Expectations

b. Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment

From the Analysis of variance in table III, another simple regression model was fitted to the data with meeting diverse workforce career development expectations as the independent variable and employee commitment as dependent variable and the model was found to be significant (F(1,422)=223.55, p<0.001) and R squared=0.346. This implies that meeting diverse workforce career development expectations index on its own explains 58.3% of the variation in employee commitment index.

Table IV:
Regression Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	40.407	2.137		18.908	.000
	Meeting Expectations	0.533	0.036	0.588	14.952	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment

The model coefficient in table IV was found to be significantly different from zero ($t=14.952$, $p<0.001$). The model equation generated for meeting diverse workforce career development expectations is $Y= 40.41+0.53X_1$. This implies that every unit measure of meeting diverse workforce career development expectations leads to 0.53 increase in employee commitment. This shows that meeting diverse workforce career development expectations contributed to employee commitment in public universities.

Thus from the findings of this study meeting diverse workforce career development expectations has a positive influence on employee commitment.

Therefore we reject the hypothesis based on the study objective that;

H_{01} : Meeting diverse workforce career development expectations has no significant effect on employees' commitment in public universities in Kenya and concluded that Meeting diverse workforce career development expectations significantly influences employee commitment.

Moderation models using R squared significance change of variables

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_M M + \varepsilon$$

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_M M + \beta_{M_i} X_i M + \varepsilon$$

$$(i=1,2,3,4)$$

Where M_i is the moderating variable (Perceived organization support) and $X_i M$ is the interaction term between i independent variables and the moderating variable.

In order to determine the moderating effect of perceived organization support (M) on the relationship between meeting diverse workforce career development expectations (X_1), and employee commitment (Y), perceived organization support (M) and the interaction term were hierarchically added into a regression procedure in SPSS.

Three models arising from this were found to be significant (see table 5) below. From the model summary table it is clear that adding Perceived organization support (M) to a model containing meeting diverse workforce career development expectations (X_1) as a predictor improved the R squared by 0.125 which was significant with $p<0.001$. But adding the interaction term to the model containing the other two variable did not significantly improve the model (change in R squared =0.000, $p=0.089$) implying that the moderating role of perceived organization support (M) is not statistically significant.

Table V:

Moderating models using R squared significance change of variables

Independent variables Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
X ₁	.588 _a	0.346	0.345	16.95097	0.346	223.55	1	42	0.000
X ₁ and M	.686 _b	0.471	0.468	15.26925	0.125	99.075	1	42	0.000
X ₁ , M and X ₁ *M	.689 _c	0.474	0.471	15.23484	0.004	2.904	1	42	0.089

The moderating effect on employee commitment by perceived organization support on the meeting diverse workforce career development expectations was not statistically significant based on the regression results in which the interaction term was insignificant ($t = -1.704$, $p = 0.089$). This can be explained to mean that public University employees are keen on their career development activities with or without perceived organization support.

Hence accepting the hypothesis;

Ho₂: Perceived Organization support (POS) has no moderating effect of on the relationship between meeting diverse workforce career development expectations and employees' commitment in public universities in Kenya.

Conclusions

The objective was to establish the effect of meeting diverse workforce career development expectations on employee commitment in public universities in Kenya. Meeting diverse workforce career development expectations has a positive influence on employee commitment.

The descriptive findings showed that 67.4% of employees did not agree that public universities have mentoring programs for those aged 46 years and above as well as the younger workforce. Also 51.9% of the respondents did not agree that their career expectations are met in public universities.

From the findings it is evident that there is positive correlation between meeting diverse workforce career development expectations and employee commitment. The regressions results showed that every unit measure of meeting diverse workforce career development expectations leads to 0.53 increase in employee commitment. Meeting diverse workforce career development expectations index on its own explains 58.3% of the variation in employee commitment index.

Meeting diverse workforce career development expectations will increase employee commitment since employees will continuously demonstrate creativity, adaptability, and manageability throughout their entire career development stages.

Recommendations

- i. Employees in public universities are in different levels in the career development stage and each group of employees have their unique need. It is recommended that public universities develop policies that cater for all diverse employees in all the Human resources practices. The findings of this study indicate that urgent attention should be paid to policy development and use of proactive recruitment policies and practices to manage workforce diversity effectively.
- ii. It is recommended that public universities come up with formal and informal mentoring programs for both the younger and the aged workforce. This will help in employees achieving their career goals in all the stages of career development cycle and hence enhance employees' commitment to the university.
- iii. In this study 51.9% of the respondents did not agree that their career expectations are met in the public university where they work. It is recommended that public universities integrate activities related to individual career planning by the employees and organization career management for employees. This will provide employees with appropriate opportunities to grow within the organization and expand their horizons as well as upgrade and use their skills to maximum possible extent. In return the organization benefits and encourages employee retention.
- iv. Create an organization culture that encourages employees learning from one another, the older employees to learn from the younger workforce and vice versa. This will help in knowledge conservation and also improve on mentoring and coaching that will result to knowledge transfer among employee and this increases employee commitment.
- v. The public universities should manage diverse employee's expectations of career advancement by setting realistic expectations upfront and communicating them.
- vi. Public universities to have strategic human resource plan with good workforce diversity practices that would promote productivity and enhance employee and organizational performance.

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