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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE INFLUENCE OF SUPERVISOR-EMPLOYEE REALATIONSHIP ON RETENTION OF MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN BOMET AND KERICHO COUNTIES, KENYA

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Abstract

Prevailing trends of turnover in hospitals in Kenya shows a need for hospital management to look for effective ways of controlling and retaining its most valued employees. In contribution to this, the research sought to assess how supervisor-employee relationships influence retention of millennial employees in private hospitals in Bomet and Kericho Counties. The study adopted descriptive research design. The target population comprised all employees of private hospitals in Bomet and Kericho Counties. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the respondents of the study. The basis of stratification was age of employees. Questionnaire, interview schedule and content analysis were the main data collection tools. Qualitative data were analyzed in form of frequency counts and percentages. Karl Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was computed to establish the level of significance of relationships between study variables. A Karl Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed using a two tailed test at 0.01 to establish the strength of each of the components of supervisor-employee relationship aspects on retention of millennial employees. The r- values ranged from 0.631 to 0.834. All r- values were above 0.500. The study, therefore, established a significant relationship between supervisor-employee relationship and retention of millennial employees at their work places. This shows that there is a strong correlation between supervisor-employee relationship and retention of millennial employees in private hospitals under study. Of greatest significance was the strength attached to supervisor's appreciation of employee's work in the hospitals. The study strongly recommends that hospital managements should develop innovative and competitive intervention strategies to help them build sustainable retention of millennial employees. The supervisors should strive to build congenial relationships between them and their employees in order to enhance retention of millennial employees.

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INTRODUCTION

Millennial employees are considered to belong to persons born either between 1978 and 1984 or after 1980 (Martin & Tulgan, 2001). They are also referred to as the internet (or dot.com) generation, millennials, echo boomers,

Generation Y, Generation Y'ers or nexters (Broadbridge, Maxwell & Ogden, 2007). For the purpose of this paper, they are persons born between 1978 and 1995. They are replacing the retiring Baby Boomers and are changing positions and organizations. They have also caused the current generational shift in the labour force which is not only occurring in the US, it is a worldwide phenomenon (Rolljo, 2008).

Mobley *et al.* (1979) define staff retention as keeping members of staff that an organization wants to retain, whilst accepting that some will leave. Lack of retention of employees can affect an organization's capacity to meet patients' needs and provide quality care (Price & Mueller, 1981). Griffith, Hom and Gaertner (2000) report that retaining the best professional talent is of great practical significance to organizations as it eliminates the recruiting, selection and on-boarding costs of their replacement. It also maintains continuity in their areas of expertise, enhance employee engagement and support a culture in which merit can be rewarded. Bhatnagar (2007), through a research on talent management strategy of employee engagement in Indian ITES employees: key to retention, claims that employee engagement is difficult to create as it is in many ways emotional and based on intangible factors. However, he agrees with many business theorists that keeping hold of staff is central. Staff retention is so important and the primary maker or breaker of the bottom line. Anami (2012) in an article in *The Standard* newspaper of Kenya on 'HR managers urged to embrace Generation Y' reports that high talent millennial employees should be sourced and retained at all costs.

Supervisor-employee Relationship

Martin (2005) argues that millennial employees want bosses who are open, positive and who empower them. This is done by supervisors who grant autonomy to employees in job delegation and enlargements. The belief is that autonomy decreases turnover by its positive impact on job satisfaction (Price, 2001). Millennial employees want clear directions and managerial support but they also demand the freedom and flexibility to get the task done in their own way and at their own pace. They work well alone, work better together and are more accustomed to team playing than previous generations (Bassett, 2008). When they lack manager's support on this they are likely to leave an organization. Ghosh and Sahney (2010) report that the supervisor is the most influential person in staff decisions through the experience of intrinsic rewards; personal commitment to the organization; and perceptions of career success. Respect for a person's strengths, uniqueness, and rights are the primary elements in the success of all staff retention efforts. This is normally present in congenial relationships between employees and their supervisors (Ghosh & Sahney, 2010).

Koustab (2010) claims that reduction of the losses of people who cannot adjust to their new job because of 'induction crisis' can be achieved by being given proper training and support when they join the organization by their immediate supervisor's. When supervisors eliminate unpleasant working conditions which cause too much stress on employees, the employees perceive them as supportive and cordial relationship exists between them. Supervisors are normally mentors of the employees because employees gain job experiences through job delegation, secondments, and autonomy. Effective selection, briefing and training of supervisors as team leaders make them appreciate the positive contribution of their employees. This leads to improved retention of millennial employees by building teamwork among employees. An effective supervisor will facilitate professional development of employees by consistently modelling congenial relationship and strengths-oriented behaviours that help staff grow through their most difficult and emotionally charged times and events (Mckenzie *et al.*, 2007). Honouring and building on staff strengths, including the individual's capacity to cope with stress, learn and change, is key to successful retention in medical service discharging organizations. Preserving the dignity of the individual is important in staff retention for it drives organizations' success. It is a principle that is essential to achieving positive outcomes with hospital clients.

Bhal, Gulati and Ansari (2009) argue that the significance of understanding leader behaviour is largely determined by understanding its impact on employee behaviour. The need for better understanding of and research evidence for, the critical role played by supervisors in stimulating affective reactions to the work experience and the employee's decision to leave the organization is needed (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010). When supervisor-employee relationship is good, employees experience job satisfaction, less stress and desire to stay in the peaceful work environment. This became the premise for the need of this research to determine the extent to which supervisor-employee relationship influence retention of millennial employees in private hospitals in Bomet and Kericho Counties.

Manager support exists when employees perceive their immediate manager as leading by example and when he gives them the support they need to do the job well. This is also true when he is perceived to be personally effective, and is good at developing people. Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski and Erez (2001) demonstrated the importance of manager-employee relationships in linking people to their job and organization. Richard, Ismail, Bhuian and Taylor (2009) concluded from prior studies of Guzzo, Noonan and Elron (1994), Wayne, Shore and Linden (1997), Bartlett (2001), Whitener (2001) Lee and Bruvold (2003) and Gould-Williams and Davies (2005) that since immediate

managers are perceived as agents of the organization, their behaviours play critical roles in shaping the employees' attitudes and behaviours, and their level of commitment to their organizations. When an employee's commitment is low due to poor supervisor-employee relationship in the private hospitals, turnover is realized.

Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010) reported that how the manager support is perceived is important in shaping employee attitudes, which subsequently influences commitment and turnover intentions. Maertz, Griffeth, Campell and Allen (2007) in their research found out that perceived supervisory support had independent effects on turnover intentions. Knowledge workers had the highest organizational commitment when they perceived a learning culture and were supervised in a supportive fashion (Joo, 2010). Bhatnagar (2007) concludes that supervisors enhance employee engagement by mentoring them. Mentoring relationships were associated with subjective outcomes such as career satisfaction and expectations for advancement (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz & Lima, 2004). Thomas and Tymon (2009) refer manager support to as the building blocks of intrinsic motivation from intrinsic rewards. These feelings reinforce and energize self-management efforts and make work personally fulfilling and create an upward spiral of positive feelings and experiences.

Quigley and Tymon (2006) argue that when an employee experience intrinsic rewards from supervisors it produces a sense of career success. This inhibits their intentions to leave, increase job commitment and develop organizational loyalty. Perceptions of career success relate negatively with intention to leave (Griffeth *et al.*, 2000). This is because intention to quit is one of the best predictors of turnover. If supervisor's relationship with the employee is good and his career success is associated with the supervisor then the employee is likely not to leave his organization. The intrinsic rewards received from the supervisor involve the positive feelings which reinforce and energize self-management efforts and make work personally fulfilling. Experiencing intrinsic rewards helps to create an upward spiral of positive feelings and experiences. Manager support is seen as key in the sponsored-mobility perspective of career success which asserts that career success depends on being sponsored by managers and other organizational elites (Ng *et al.*, 2005).

Anami (2012) reported that there were complaints that HR managers are to blame for the poor working relationships with the millennial employees. When employees perceive that their supervisor contributes to the job both in terms of quality and quantity; they too reciprocate with more contribution. Bhal *et al.* (2009) concludes that enhancing work related interaction through coaching, guiding, or effectively delegating can result in higher levels of performance. This leads to greater intrinsic and extrinsic rewards which determine retention of employees in an organization. Briscoe and Finkelstein (2009) argue that for employees with protean and boundary-less attitudes, managers and employers who provide opportunities for self-direction, value-expression, and internal opportunities will be more likely to gain commitment. If the relationship between supervisor and employee shows supervisor support then the employees are likely to be committed to their organizations and so retention of the productive employees for a longer time with the organization.

Problem Statement

In Kenya, a research by Ndeti *et al.* (2008) on incentive for health worker retention points out that internal migration of health workers in Kenya from rural to urban areas is as serious a problem as international migration. This necessitated incentives to recruit and retain personnel in hospitals. HRH – Annual Report – Kenya (2010) indicates that critical shortage of key health staff across regions, cadres and sub-sectors made their retention necessary. In the report the health policy makers and managers frequently highlighted retention as a major human resource challenge in Kenya with little empirical evidence to support their concerns.

Tenwek Hospital its Annual Report (2010) admits that they lost 40 nurses and some clinicians to the government under Structural Economic Stimulus Programme (SESP). This created shortages in many departments causing increased workload, shortages of staff, inadequate counselling time, reduced efficiency and effectiveness and frequent staff redeployments. The foregoing background information shows that there is need to retain millennial health workers in Kenyan hospitals which currently are affected by high turnover. In order to achieve this, the study assessed the socio-technical determinants of retention of millennial employees in private hospitals in Bomet and Kericho Counties. Gosh and Sahaney (2010) note that in any organizational retention problem, socio-technical factors are at play. This paper research determined the influence of supervisor-employee relationship on retention of millennial employees in private hospitals in Bomet and Kericho Counties.

Limitations of the Study

The study was confined to a representative sample of private hospitals instead of the whole population. The nature of the hospital work posed a challenge and the author had to take more time waiting for the appropriate time when the respondents were available to fill the questionnaires and participate in the interviews. The attitude of the respondents and limited sources of information were delimited by assuring the informants of the confidentiality of

their responses. The research explored areas hitherto unfamiliar to researchers in this country; hence the author had to look outside the country for information on retention of millennial employees in hospitals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted descriptive survey design. It includes surveys and fact finding inquiries of different kinds (Kothari, 2009). It was appropriate because it was used to collect data about variables of subjects as they are found in a social system describing the state of affairs as they exist at present. This study targeted private hospitals in Bomet and Kericho Counties which had a total population of 1196 employees. A comprehensive, correct, reliable and appropriate list of all hospital staff was prepared (Kothari, 2009). This was used to select a sample of the target population because a researcher rarely has direct access to the entire population of interest in social science research. A representative sample of the hospital staff was studied. The sample size considered costs of the research and parameters of interest (socio-technical factors). A 30% sample of 359 respondents from a population of 1196 employees in private hospitals in Bomet and Kericho Counties was studied.

Stratified, simple random and purposive sampling procedures were used. The population was stratified into a number of non-overlapping strata. The stratification was done in the selected hospitals in to departments and sections. Later either simple random or purposive techniques were used to select the respondents. Simple random techniques were used to select hospital employees to respond to the questionnaire. Purposive sampling procedures were used with administrators, doctors and supervisors who were few to answer the questions in the interview guide. Identified methodological triangulation that involves the use of more than one method to gather data, such as interview guide, documents analysis and questionnaires was used. The questionnaires which were given to the sampled hospital employees were corroborated with the information given by the hospital management concerning similar issues. As such, interview schedules and document analysis were used along with the questionnaires. Once the data collection instruments had been administered, the mass of raw data collected was systematically organized in a manner that facilitated analysis (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Qualitative data was analyzed descriptively in form of frequency counts and percentages. Karl Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed to establish the level of significance between specific independent variables and the dependent variable.

Relationships and predictions among variables are best determined using multiple regression technique and therefore a regression analysis was computed to predict the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. All data was analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 computer software package. This ensured accuracy of the information and saved time. Analyzed data was presented by the use of charts, graphs, tables, figures and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Influence of Supervisor-Employee Relationship on Retention of Millennial Employees

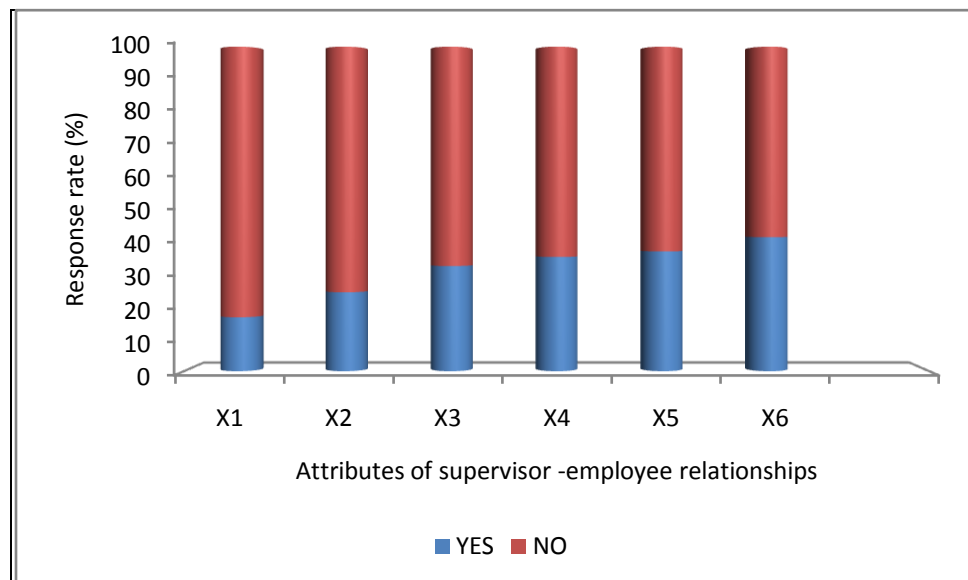


Figure 1: Supervisor-employee relationship and their retention

Source: Field data, 2013

Where:

X_1 ; *Social services provided by the hospital for my interaction with peers make me desire to continue working in this institution.*, X_2 ; *Lack of opportunities for having fun with my peers at my work place makes me desire to leave this place*, X_3 ; *The way my work is scheduled makes me have enough time to socialize with my friends*, X_4 ; *Cordial relationship with my peers makes me like working in this hospital*, X_5 ; *the equipments provided by the hospital for use to communicate with peers makes me love working in this hospital*, X_6 ; *Performing tasks in teams with peers in the hospital makes me enjoy working in this hospital.*

The hypothesis used to test the extent to which supervisor-employee relationship influences retention of millennial employees stated that: there is no significant relationship between supervisor-employee relationship and retention of millennial employees in private hospitals in Bomet and Kericho Counties. A Karl Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed using a two tailed test at 0.01 significance level. This was meant to establish the level of correlation between supervisor-employee relationship and retention of the millennial employees. The results of this computation were as tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis Results between Supervisor-employee Relationship and Employee Retention

Supervisor- Employee Relationship		Employee Retention
X1 ; Supervisor appreciates work done	Pearson Correlation	0.834**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	0.320
X2; Supervisor grants employee freedom to make job decisions	Pearson Correlation	0.757**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
	N	0.320
X3; Supervisor is employee's mentor	Pearson Correlation	0.676**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	0.320
X4; Supervisor-employee relationship is cordial	Pearson Correlation	0.648**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002
	N	0.320
X5; Supervisor has contributed to employee career development	Pearson Correlation	0.631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004
	N	0.320
X6; Supervisor has influenced employee decision to continue working	Pearson Correlation	0.587**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
	N	0.320

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

The results indicate that the calculated p-values for all the supervisor-employee relationship variables were less than the significance level of 0.01. Therefore, there exists a significant relationship between supervisor-employee relationship and retention of millennial employees at their work places. Further, the results confirmed a strong positive correlation for the choice variables tested at one percentage significance level with supervisor appreciation of employee's work having the highest ($r = 0.834$), followed by supervisor granting employee freedom to make job-related decisions ($r = 0.757$), supervisor as employee's mentor ($r = 0.676$), cordial supervisor-employee relationship ($r = 0.648$), supervisor's contribution to employee's career development ($r = .631$), and supervisor influencing employee's decision to continue working ($r = .587$ with $p < 0.01$). Employee's work appreciation, freedom to make job-related decisions, mentorship, and career development granted by the supervisor had a high and positive significance while supervisor's influence on employee's decision to continue working scored averagely. The r-values ranged from 0.631 to 0.834. All r- values were above 0.500. This shows that there is a strong correlation between supervisor-employee relationship and retention of millennial employees in private hospitals under study. The null hypothesis was therefore ignored and the substantive one that there is significant relationship between supervisor-employee relationship and retention of millennial employees in private hospitals in Bomet and Kericho

Counties adopted. Therefore, supervisor-employee relationship is an important attribute that significantly affects retention of millennial employees at their work places.

This finding is in tandem with observations made by Ghosh and Sahney (2010) who report that the supervisor is the most influential person in staff decisions through the experience of intrinsic rewards; personal commitment to the organization; and perceptions of career success. Besides, Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010) observe that how the manager support is perceived is important in shaping employee attitudes, which subsequently influences commitment and turnover intentions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evidently, supervisor-employee relationship is an important attribute that significantly affects retention of millennial employees at their work places. Of greatest significance is the strength attached to employee appreciation provided to millennial employees in the private hospitals. From the findings, it is recommended that the hospital management should use the findings to develop innovative and competitive intervention strategies to help them build sustainable retention of millennial employees. Specifically, the supervisors should use the findings to improve their relationship with millennial employees by appreciating them, granting them freedom to make job-related decisions, being their mentor and participating in their career development in order to enhance their retention in the hospitals.

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