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TALENT ATTRACTION PRACTICE AND SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN CHARTERED UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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Abstract

Universities contribute greatly to economic development of a country. However, Universities experience scarcity of academic staff due to tremendous increase in student enrolment yet little attention is given to attraction and retention of staff for sustainable performance. This study determined the relationship between talent attraction practice (TAP) and sustainable



organizational performance (SOP) in Chartered Universities in Kenya. Maslow Hierarchy of Needs theory guided the study. Correlational and retrospective longitudinal designs were adopted. Target population constituted 51 Registrars purposively selected from 51 Chartered Universities as at 2020. Primary and secondary data was collected using questionnaires and document review guide respectively. The response rate was 90.2%. Pilot study was conducted on 5 Universities and reliability confirmed by Cronbach Alpha coefficient 0.874. Relevant approvals were obtained before data collection. Data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive statistics revealed TAP (Mean=4.0293, Standard Deviation =0.76139). Inferential statistics revealed that talent attraction practice had statistically significant relationship with sustainable organizational performance; TAP ($R=0.751$; $R^2=0.564$; $\beta=0.404$ and $p=0.000$). The R value 0.751 indicated a strong positive correlation, $R^2= 0.564$ implied that 56.4% of variation in SOP was explained by TAP and the remaining 43.6% was attributed to other factors outside the model. The model was significant ($F=56.861$, $p=0.000$). The study concluded that talent attraction practice is a critical predictor to sustainable organizational performance. This study informs policy formulation on TAP and its contribution towards sustainable performance in Chartered Universities Kenya.

Keywords: Talent Attraction, Academic Staff, Sustainable Organizational Performance, Chartered Universities

INTRODUCTION

Talent attraction practice (TAP) in Universities is considered important since Universities contribute greatly to economic development of a country hence they require employees with the potential to make significant contributions necessary for sustainable performance. Talent attraction practice aims at searching, acquisition and deployment of employees with high skills that create a significant value to an organization (Humaid, 2018). According to Ansar & Baloch (2018) Talent Attraction Practice influences organizational performance and thus organizations need to place a proportionate emphasis on all factors in order to remain sustainable.

According to Srihandayani & Kusnendi (2020) TAP involves planned activities related to acquisition of employee who possess critical skills that are valuable to an organization. It facilitates preparation of a pool of talent necessary for improving organizational performance aimed at realizing a sustained competitive advantage (Ansar & Baloch, 2018). In South Africa, Abiwu (2021) focused on recruitment and selection and emphasized the need for employer branding which correlates with talent attraction and retention within organizations. Ansar &

Baloch (2018) argued that organizations in the United States had not embraced talent attraction practice well over the years but instead grappled with managing talents whose expectations rapidly and constantly changed as best established practices quickly become obsolete. According to Damayanti (2021) global decisions regarding talent recruitment were faced with challenges hence talent attraction cannot be overlooked by organizations seeking to be outstanding in performance in order to achieve sustainable performance.

According to Humaid (2018) Talent attraction focuses on rebranding of already established brands of human resource management practices aimed at identifying and attracting high potential employees and exceptional performers who are valuable to an organisation. Abiwu (2021) asserted that in an uncertain business environment characterized with competition, Universities require employees with the potential to make significant contributions to the organization. In Pakistan, Mujtaba & Mubarik (2021) established that talent attraction was an important and the strongest variable for sustained performance yet most organizations failed to be proactive in TAP but rather became reactive after unfortunate events that compelled management to plan for attraction.

Empirical literature revealed little evidence on the influence of TAP on organizational success aimed at sustainable organizational performance (Thunnissen, 2016). Mujtaba & Mubarik (2021) and Kusi, Opoku-Danso, & Afum (2020) revealed that TAP played a critical role on sustainable performance and had a direct relationship with organization performance. Eghbal, Hoveida, Seyadat, Samavatyan & Yarmohammadian (2017) attested that improvement of talent attraction practice could lead to increased faculty members' improved research performance. However, Al Aina & Atan (2020) argued that, TAP had no impact on sustainable organizational performance. In addition, it was not exclusively clear whether these talent attraction practices were really the greatest contributor to organization success over time (Thunnissen, 2016).

In Africa, Tetey (2006) argued that for a long time, educational institutions especially Higher Education Institutions (HEIS) were confronted with challenges related to recruitment and retention of academic staff. He established that reduced funding coupled with increased student numbers, an aging professoriate and existing narrow skill base depleted by brain drain led to extreme pressure on human resources (Tetey, 2006). The situation got worse as was evidenced by Tetey (2009) and Mushemenza (2016) findings which revealed that, high students' enrolments were increasingly overwhelming African institutions without a corresponding increase in academic staff capacity leading to staff gap of 25 to 50 percent.

Sustainable Organizational Performance

In Universities, implementing a sustainable university model is a process of continual improvement which requires key stakeholders to allocate additional funds for sustainability initiatives (Velazquez, Munguia, Platt & Taddei, 2006). Successful managers strived to achieve prosperity and long-term sustainability (Hussain, Eskildsen, Edgeman, Ismail, Shoukry & Gani (2019).

According to Hussain, et., al, (2019) the SOP was measured and evaluated in terms of teaching quality, research culture and technological capability. Nevertheless, Dumitrascu & Ciudin (2015) classified University sustainable performance as students' performance, students' involvement in extracurricular activities, admission numbers and career guidance events. In Spain, De Filippo, Sandoval-Hamón, Casani & Sanz-Casado (2019) considered sustainable performance in terms of research output. Wang, Yang & Maresova (2020) in China, assessed students' enrolment and found that over 90% of revenues emanated from the tuition fees, consequently affecting the campus operation efficiency, recruiting process, education, and research quality hence a contributor to sustainable performance. Similar view on student enrolment was shared by Chebeň, Lančarič, Munk & Obdržálek (2020).

According to Gutierrez (2017) sustainability performance indicators for Universities include: university revenue measured by student enrolment, total workforce, staff turnover, employees' training hours, employee and customer satisfaction practices. Amrina & Imansuri (2015) focused on total number of courses offered, research funding, publications and student numbers and a sustainable University in terms of students' numbers was ranked second among the parameters of sustainable performance. Horan & O'Regan (2021) found that sustainable performance was measured in terms of student enrolment in different programmes.

Statement of the Problem

Universities being centres of intellectual excellence and innovation hubs contribute greatly to economic development of a country and consider talent as a critical asset that can promote superior and sustainable performance. To sustain this critical role, Universities through proper talent attraction practice, should attract and retain highly skilled academic staff to offer quality and relevant service to support achievement of long term goals. Commission for University Education (CUE) provides the recommended quality and quantity of academic staff in terms of lecturer to student ratios, supervision requirements and requisite qualifications for quality service. However, previous researches reveal that this has not been sustainable probably due to poor attraction, development and retention practices, poorly managed careers and succession planning practices. In addition, existing cultures create varying environment that

may influences the nature of the long-term plans. Universities have been experiencing scarcity of lecturers in terms of quantity and quality due to pressure occasioned by tremendous increase in student enrolment yet little focus is given to their attraction and retention to meet such demands hence a threat to continued survival. CUE is on record expressing concern over a shortfall of academic staff with PhD qualifications and relevant skills. Specifically, Graduate Assistants at 7%, Tutorial Fellows 33%, Lecturers 40%, Senior Lecturers 12%, Associate Professors at 5% and Professors at 3%; majority of aging staff being professors yet low number of yearly PhD graduands are groomed to replace them. It is also worrisome that the existing narrow skill base is continuously being eroded by unprecedented exits pointing at a skill gap that can compromise on quality and relevance of service hence an urgent need for talent attraction. This study therefore sought to determine the relationship between talent attraction practice and sustainable organizational performance in Chartered Universities in Kenya.

General Objective

The general objective of this study was to determine the relationship between Talent Attraction Practice and Sustainable Organizational Performance in Chartered Universities in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Talent Attraction Practice and Sustainable Organizational Performance

Talent attraction practice is a strategic human resource management area with increasing significance amongst professionals and academicians (Humaid, 2018). This is due to the currents uncertain business environment characterized with competition compelling Universities to ensure acquisition of employees with the right potential to make significant contributions to the organizations (Abiwu, 2021). Humaid (2018) established a statistically significant influence of talent attraction on organizational performance. The correlation was found to be moderate indicating the need for bank to emphasize more on attracting the top talented employees despite the bank having a more compelling employment brand.

Eghbal, Hoveida, Seyadat, Samavatyan & Yarmohammadian (2017) argued that established that attraction as talent attraction practice had an influence on academic research performance. Alam, Alam & Mubeen (2021); Mohammed, Baig & Gururajan (2020); Eghbal et al., (2017) and Ekwoaba, Ikeije, & Ufoma (2015) agreed that practices related to attraction significantly influence the level of performance. In determining the impact of talent attraction practice on organization sustainability, Mujtaba & Mubarik (2022) found a significant and positive impact.

According to Nangia & Mohsin (2020) in a pandemic driven volatile, uncertain complex and ambiguous environment in an IT industry talent acquisition was found to be a low priority area during the COVID period as organizations were interested in preserving cash. Similarly, Al Aina & Atan (2020) established no impact of attraction on sustainable organizational performance.

According to Rop & Kwasira (2015) and Rukunga & Nzulwa (2018) talent attraction greatly and significantly influence organization performance as supported by Lyria, Namusonge & Karanja (2017) who also agreed that talent attraction significantly contribute in explaining organizational performance of listed companies in Kenya.

It is evident from the above studies that the study findings were varied and inconsistent in certain researches. In addition, most of them were carried out in different contexts other than Universities. However, those that were conducted in Universities mainly focused on Public Universities with participants being mainly the administrative staff. This study was conducted in Universities with the Registrars who are professionals in ensuring the right talent as the main participants.

Hypothesis: (H₀) stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between talent attraction practice and sustainable organizational performance in Chartered Universities in Kenya.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

The study was anchored on Hierarchy of Needs theory of motivation. The theory believes that human needs are organized in five levels; physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Armstrong & Tylor, 2014). According to Maslow, the needs at the lower level must be satisfied before the next level in the rank. In the context of this study, the theory helped to expound on factors that attract employees to an organization which are related to satisfaction of different levels of needs in the hierarchy (Rop & Kwasira, 2015). Different employees are attracted to organizations that promise to satisfy their different needs. According to Lyria, Namusonge & Karanja (2017) organizations can assure its employees basic needs through fair and competitive compensation as well as safe working conditions. When extending a job offer, physiological needs directly correspond to pay rate. Employees whose psychological needs have been satisfied have their safety needs becoming dominant. An organization can assure safety needs through provision of benefits such as retirement plans, medical insurance, job security, occupational safety and health of the working conditions (Rop & Kwasira, 2015). During the recruitment process, the employer should demonstrate commitment in investing in employee safety needs like healthy working conditions.

Social need is concerned with need for belonging to a social set up; to be loved, to gain affection and acceptance as belonging to a group (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Candidates tend to be attracted to a workplace with a clear and distinct corporate brand with corporate values system that promotes unity in diversity. During the process of recruitment and selection, candidates expect a demonstration of a workplace that emphasizes opportunities for employees to socialize. Employees are likely to be attracted to work for organizations that show commitments of fulfilling their social needs by ensuring harmonious working relations, good work–life integration and a cordial social net-working (Lyria, Namusonge & Karanja, 2017).

Self esteem is about the need for appreciation of self worth, self respect, demonstration of confidence in employees and trust in employee abilities and desire for reputation (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). These desires call for working in organizations with reputable employer brands (Onah & Anikwe, 2016), a workplace that honors employee achievements. To realize self-actualization, organizations tend to attract candidates by demonstrating that they can offer opportunities for employee growth to full their potential specifically by encouraging a culture of innovation and creativity, and promoting autonomy.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual frame is diagrammatically presented as in figure 1.

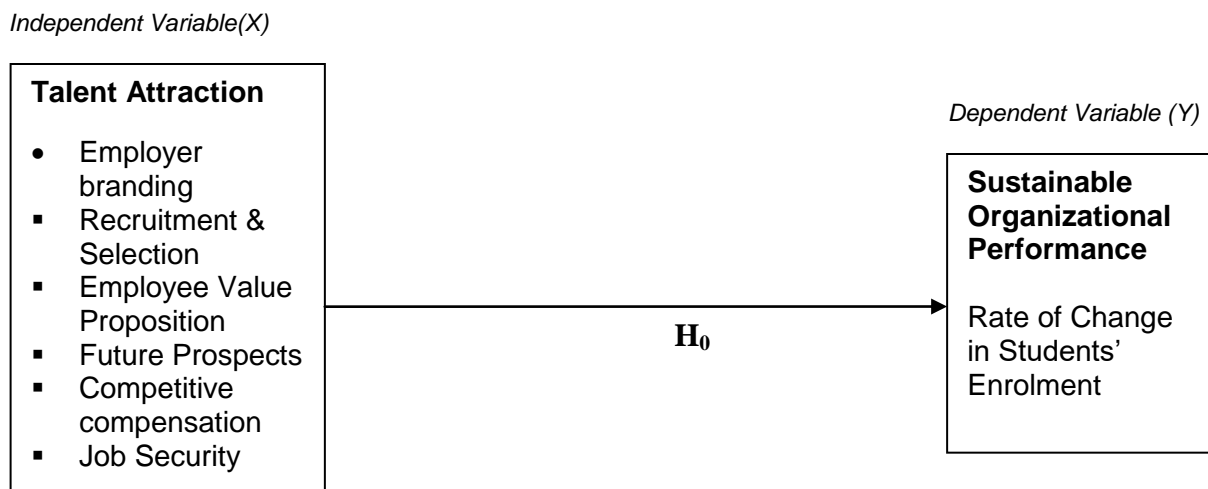


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Talent Attraction Practice and Sustainable Organizational Performance

The conceptual framework in this study showed the relationship between two variables (independent and dependent). Specifically, the two variables were; Talent attraction practice and Sustainable Organizational Performance. According to Ibrahim and Daniel (2018) Talent

Attraction Practice (TAP) comprised employer branding, employer of choice, employee value proposition and recruitment and selection. Recruitment of talent was the first task of TM process which supported talent attraction practice. Employer branding also determined a company's image and was good enough to attract employees. Without the good brand image, it is difficult to attract the right talents. Sustainable Organizational Performance was the dependent variable measured in terms of rate of change in students' enrolment which contributed to over 90% revenue collected through tuition fee hence affecting campus operation efficiency, recruiting process, education, and research quality hence a contributor to sustainable performance (Wang, Yang & Maresova, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was anchored on the positivism philosophy since it involved statistical testing of the hypotheses. The study also involved collection of quantitative and qualitative data. Cross-sectional and retrospective longitudinal designs were adopted. Cross-sectional research design facilitated collection of data on talent attraction practice at one point in time. Retrospective longitudinal design allowed for review of students enrolment records to facilitate collection of data on sustainable performance parameter which was determined by rate of change in students' enrolment covering the period 2017/2018-2021/2022 (Kumar (2018)).

Location

This study was carried out in all the fifty one (51) Chartered Universities as at the year 2020 geographically dispersed in the Republic of Kenya.

Target Population

The study targeted 51 registrars in charge of human resources in all the 51 Chartered Universities in Kenya being professionals involved in talent management practices in the Chartered Universities. Pilot study was conducted with five Chartered Universities. Given that the study was a census, all the 51 Registrars in-charge of Human Resources or respective designates were purposively sampled for the study. A census was conducted on the entire population of 51 Registrars.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study adopted a census design and all the 51 Registrars in charge of Human Resources or respective designates in Chartered Universities in Kenya were purposively

selected to participate in the study. Structured questionnaire was adopted to collect qualitative data focusing on opinions of respondents regarding the independent variable (talent attraction practice). The structured questionnaire was designed to collect primary data. Document review Guide was adopted to collect secondary data on the dependent variable, Sustainable Organizational Performance which was operationalized as the rate of change (ROC) in students' enrolment over a period five (5) years. Specifically, this data was collected from Government accredited reports such as the Kenya Bureau of Statistics Annual Published Reports and Commission for University Education Reports on students' enrolment for a period covering the 2017/2018 to 2021/2022 academic years.

Validity of Instrument, Pilot Study and Reliability

Different types of validity were considered in research; content, internal, external and criterion. According to Kothari (2004) content validity was assured by engaging a panel of technical experts in the Departmental, School and Graduate Studies Boards respectively to carefully review the questionnaire and the document review tool for appropriateness. Validity of the document review tool was assured through careful choice of accredited sites containing accredited Government records on students' enrolment.

A pilot study was conducted on five Universities chartered after the year 2020 since the main study focused on chartered Universities as at 2020. The choice of the 5 Universities was informed by Connelly (2008) who recommends 10% of the study sample to constitute a pilot sample. Reliability was thereafter tested. To ascertain reliability in this study, reliability was computed using SPSS. A threshold of 0.7 Cronbach's alpha (or more) was taken as a limit for ascertaining whether the research tools' indicators comprised a reliable scale. The reliability of the variable was computed using Cronbach's alpha and a coefficient of 0.874 was obtained which was higher than the threshold of 0.70.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire

Description	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Remark
Talent attraction practice	6	0.874	Accepted

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

Diagnostic Tests

Normality of data was confirmed through test of skewness and kurtosis with the respective standard errors falling within the acceptable range of +/-2. To test assumption of multicollinearity, the study established a VIF<3, an indication of absence of multicollinearity. The

tolerance levels were acceptable as they were all less than 0 and 1. The Durbin Watson value was acceptable within $1.5 < d < 2.5$ confirming no autocorrelation. Test of linearity and correlation were confirmed through determination of Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) in a correlation matrix which established existence of association of variables as shown by ($r=0.751$) correlation between TAP and SOP and ($r=0.778$).

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Respondents largely agreed with the statements on talent attraction as supported by mean score of 4.0293 and standard deviation value of 0.76139 indicating that 76.13% of the estimated values were clustered around the mean. On the other hand, statements on organization culture scored a mean of 4.2120 and a standard deviation value of 0.86775 also indicating that 86.77% of the estimated values were clustered around the mean. Sustainable organizational performance recorded a mean score of 0.4549 and standard deviation value of 0.41011 indicating a wide range of responses. Correlation results indicated that talent attraction practice and sustainable organizational performance were positively and significantly correlated ($r=0.751$; $p=0.000$).

Talent Attraction Practice and Sustainable Organizational Performance

Table 2: Model Summary for Talent Attraction Practice and Sustainable Organizational Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.751	.564	.554	.27394	2.385

a. Predictors: (Constant), TAP

b. Dependent Variable: SOP

The Regression results revealed by correlation coefficient ($R=0.751$) confirmed that a strong and positive association existed between talent attraction practice and sustainable organizational performance.

The coefficient of determination $R^2=0.564$ indicated that 56.4% of the variances in sustainable organizational performance were explained by the variances in the talent attraction practices. This implied that the other 43.6% was attributed to other factors not explained by talent attraction practice.

Table 3: ANOVA for Talent Attraction Practice and Sustainable Organizational Performance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.267	1	4.267	56.861	.000
	Residual	3.302	44	.075		
	Total	7.569	45			

a. Dependent Variable: SOP

b. Predictors: (Constant), TAP

From Table 3, the results indicated that the influence of talent attraction practice on sustainable organizational performance in Chartered Universities in Kenya was significant ($F=56.861$; $p<0.05$). The p value (.000) being $<.05$, implied a statistically significant relationship between the predictor, TAP and the outcome variable, SOP and hence the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted.

Table 4: Coefficients for Talent Attraction Practice and Sustainable Organizational Performance

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		Collinearity	Statistics	
		Coefficients		Coefficients				
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-1.175	.220		-5.343	.000		
	TAP	.404	.054	.751	7.541	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: SOP

From Table 4, the results further showed a β coefficient of 0.404 which implied that, every 1 unit increase in talent attraction practice contributed to increase in sustainable organizational performance by 0.404.

The findings were in agreement with studies by Mujtaba & Mubarik (2022), Kafetzopoulos & Gotzamani, K. (2022), Adejare (2022), Humaid (2018), and Lyria, Namusonge & Karanja (2017) all found statistically significant relationship between talent attraction and sustainable organizational performance. Alam, Alam & Mubeen (2021) and Rop & Kwasira (2015) also agreed that talent attraction significantly contribute in explaining organizational performance. However, the results contradicted the findings by Al Aina & Atan (2020) who found that talent attraction had no impact on sustainable performance in a study conducted in real estate companies. Most probably, the real estate companies did not emphasize talent attraction policies as they could be having little or no concern about them. The small and medium sized real estate companies seemed not to identify talent at the early stage of attraction practices as was evidenced in the literature review.

These significant findings implied that there was a direct effect of attracting talent to sustainable organizational performance. The findings implied that Universities require unique strategies to acquire talent which mainly include employer branding, promise of future prospects, recruitment on merit and employee value proposition. Universities should develop talent attraction policies and practices that can guide in talent attraction.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Conclusion

The study hypothesized that that there was no relationship between talent attraction practice and sustainable organizational performance in Chartered Universities in Kenya. The study established a positive and significant relationship between talent attraction practice and sustainable organizational performance. Based on the findings, the study therefore suggested that Universities should focus more in designing innovative talent attraction strategies that can promote attraction and acquisition of the right talent to ensure sustainable performance. It was concluded that the study support realization of Sustainable Development Goals No. 4 on Quality Education since quality talents are the key drivers to quality education.

Recommendations

This thesis makes recommendations based on the reported findings of the study as per the objective. Based on the finding of that there was a positive significant relationship between talent attraction practice and sustainable organizational performance, the study recommends that Universities should create a brand image which enhances reputation and ensure employee value proposition in order to attract talent that can contribute to sustainable performance. A lot more focus should be on finding creative ways to enhance the compensation package as part of attractive packages for potential applicants.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The outcome of this study was limited to the relationship between talent attraction practice, and sustainable organizational performance in Chartered Universities in Kenya. Further studies could consider other dimensions of talent management. In addition, future studies could be conducted focusing on Universities that were chartered after the year 2020 since they did not form part of this study. Finally, a comparative study can be conducted to compare talent management practices and sustainable organizational performance in Public and Private Universities.

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