

Talent Development Strategy and Employees' Productivity in Private Sugar Companies in Kakamega County, Kenya

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Abstract

Organizations that wish to be successful in this highly competitive world are those that systematically and proactively take necessary measures to ensure that they have the needed talented workforce to meet their current and future business requirements. There exists an acute shortage of talent, especially in top managerial positions in private sugar companies in Kakamega County in Kenya. This has resulted in employees' low productivity leading to talent poaching and talent shift from private sugar companies to public sugar companies and other industrial sectors. Effective talent development strategies are therefore critical for the success of private sugar companies in Kakamega County. This study, therefore, examined the effect of talent development strategy on employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County, Kenya. The study used cross-sectional survey research design. Stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques were employed to enable the researcher to select the respondents from the two private sugar companies in Kakamega County that is, West Kenya Sugar Company Limited and Butali Sugar Company Limited. The target population was made up of 320 respondents out of which 70 were managers and 250 were operative employees'. A sample size of 178 respondents was selected. Interview schedules and questionnaires were used as instruments for data collection. Validity and Reliability of research instruments were obtained by a test re-test method from the pilot study. The researcher undertaken the study in a period between June 2016 and September 2016. The computed Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the research instrument was 0.834 which is above 0.7 Cronbach's Alpha accepted in social research. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to test the relationship between the study variables and simple linear regression analysis was used in testing the study hypothesis. Data was presented in the form of frequency distribution tables, frequencies, and percentages. The study found out that private sugar companies have inadequate talent development strategies which are the main cause of employees' low productivity. The study concluded that talent development strategy have a positive and significant relationship on employees' productivity. The study recommends that private sugar companies in Kakamega County should put in place talent development strategies because the study found out that private sugar companies with talent development strategies have high employees' productivity. Talent development strategy identified by the study entail: Promotion based on employees' merit, provision of equal training opportunities and putting in place an elaborate succession planning.

Keywords- Talent development strategy, succession planning, employees' productivity, private sugar companies

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

Today's global and highly competitive markets have made firms to become adaptive to changes around them for their survival. This has necessitated the need for firms to strategize in order to deliver excellent products that can attain competitive edge with their clientele (Deros, Rahman, Ismail, & Said, 2008). One of the major strategy

towards firms' competitiveness is through the use of its resources which includes money, employees' and machines.

The most valued resource for organization competitiveness is its employees especially in a modern economy (Kahinde, 2012; Gardner, 2002). Therefore, organizations that wish to remain competitive need to come up with programs of acquiring, retaining and developing its talented employees (Gardner, 2002). Thus, the term "Talent Development" has been used in the recent past in order to offer one window solution for all problems brought as a result of developing competent

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human resources (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2007; Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2006).

1.2 Statement of the research problem

The rationale behind talent development strategy is to develop the best talents in order to realize superior business results (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2007). Private sugar companies in Kakamega County have continuously been experiencing acute shortages of talents especially in their top managerial positions. This has resulted in poaching of talent from public sugar companies and other industrial sectors through promising of high payment and benefits which in the long run may not be the case (Ombayo *et al.*, 2014; Kenya Sugar Authority [KSA], 2013). Butali and West Kenya Sugar Companies in Kakamega County have also been experiencing talent shift to competitors due to poor working conditions, uncompetitive salaries and lack of career prospects (Rapando, 2011). These challenges have resulted to low employees' productivity in terms of few out grower farmers joining the company, a low number of tonnes crushed per month, constant customers' complaints concerning poor service delivery and wastage of production time.

This scenario has resulted in reduced company performance caused by low employees' productivity (Rapando, 2011). Studies done so far in private sugar companies in Kakamega County have attributed the current talent shortage and poor employees' productivity to lack of training and career counselling strategies (Ombayo *et al.*, 2013 & Ombayo *et al.*, 2014). None of these studies have examined the effect of talent development strategy on employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County. The study has thus raised two fundamental questions: What is the best way to develop talents in private sugar companies in Kakamega County? Can talent development strategies be used to solve the current talent shortages and low employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County? Therefore, this study bridged the knowledge gap in answering to the above questions by examining the effect of talent development strategy on employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County, Kenya.

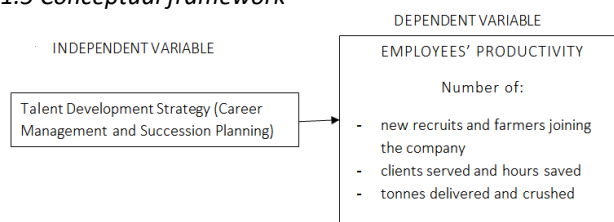
1.3 Research objective

To examine the effect of talent development strategy on employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County.

1.4 Research hypothesis

Ho: Talent development strategy has no significant effect on employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County, Kenya.

1.5 Conceptual framework



Source: Researcher conceptualization (2016)

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework showing Talent Development Strategy and Employees' Productivity.

2. Literature review

2.1 Self-concept theory on talent development

This study was guided by self-concept theory propagated by Super (1990) to explain talent development concept that focused on career management. He noted that employee's self-concept can be developed through their career choices. He suggested that employee's self-concept is based on complex interactions among different factors like mental growth, personal experience, skills, values, physical and environment growth. Super (1990) argued that successful career development and succession planning lead to an improvement of an employees self-concept. His view on enhancing employees' career choices and development is that, they are able to meet new employees, learn from them a new skills and gain new experiences. These interactions make employees have new interest and unlock new possibilities of solving life challenging jobs in their workplaces.

2.2 Talent development strategy

In this study context, talent development strategy are measures of managing employees' career prospects by upgrading their attitudes and skills to keep pace with the ever- changing business technologies. Dargham (2013) noted that when employees careers are managed properly, their competencies will be enhanced thus increase their productivity. According to Dargham (2013), career management involves several elements which focus on career planning and development, career pathing, learning and development initiatives, succession planning and performance management.

Planning and development of careers involve employees' growth and progression planning while career pathing is the creation of career paths which allows employees to develop a vision, goals and expectations of their progression. Learning and development are achieved through continuous training and experiences that employees gain while working (Allen, 2005). Dargham (2013) asserted that organizations can aid in career management through provision of self-development opportunities to its employees.

These opportunities are in form of formal and informal activities undertaken by organizations like a job enrichment, employees training workshops, job rotation, and career progression paths. According to Elliot (1998), proper career management leads to succession planning for anticipated future human resource requirement against existing human resources. Succession planning mainly focuses on developing current employees in anticipation of future key assignments (Elliot, 1998; Leibman, Bruer & Maki, 1996). Leibman *et al* (1996) argued that properly managed succession planning is capable of reducing uncertainty in employees' turnover and creates leadership teams which are strong.

In Pollit (2009) opinion, succession planning is the development of leaders and reviewing their talents regularly for future retention purposes. Topper (2008) also defined succession planning as a process of preparing future talents that can aid in the smooth running of the organizational affairs in the future. Sturgeins, Guest, Conway and Mackenzie (2002) asserted that organization performance is as a result of employees' commitment which is brought as a result of effective career management. According to Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armeli (2001), organizations that manage their employees' careers are regarded as a supportive organization. Offering employees support leads to their high performance and reduces instances of withdrawal like employees' turnover and absenteeism.

Van Dam (2004) also observed that employability orientation is high in employees whose organization support is more. Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne and Liden (2003) study on organizational career management relationship with perceived career support made the following findings: There is a positive relationship between perceived career support on one hand and career management activities and promotional opportunities on the other hand. Career management activities and promotional opportunities entail; Participation in job assignment which is challenging, career discussion in informal settings with a manager and senior colleagues mentoring relationship(s) which is positively related to perceived career support (Agarwala, 2007).

2.3 Empirical review of talent development strategy and employees' productivity

Baum and Kokkranikal (2005) defined employees' productivity as the output per each unit of labour, that is, the amount produced by each unit of labour or productive unit labour hours numbers. Productivity measures how production inputs like capital and labour are used efficiently to realize a given level of output. Organizations that utilize production input like labour increase their productivity thus creating competitive advantage in the global market (Coetsee, 2004).

According to Stockley (2007), organizations that implement their programs on talent management

balances between organization goals and employees goals. Employees are able to develop their career through career progression making an organization to increase its performance. Effective talent development encourages more employees to be innovative in coming up with solution to solve the daily organization challenges and as a result results in organization success. Collings and Mellahi (2009), supports this assertion by arguing that properly managed talent have a positive relationship with organization performance brought by employees performance.

Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2012) cross-sectional study on the relationship between talent development strategy and organization performance found out that there was a positive and significance relationship between talent development and organization performance ($r=0.728$, $\alpha=0.000$, $p\text{-value}<0.05$). Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2012) in general concluded that talent development leads to higher organization performance thus organizations that wish to be successful in this globally competitive world need to invest more on talent development strategies.

Lyria (2014) cross-sectional study on "Effects of Talent Management on Organizational Performance in Companies Listed in Nairobi Security Exchange in Kenya" found out that Talent development is positively and significantly related to organizational performance (Correlation coefficient, $r=0.252$, $\alpha=0.000$, $p\text{-value}=0.01$); Talent development regression results on organizational performance were as follows; Talent model summary (Correlation coefficient, $R=0.252$, coefficient of determination, $R^2=0.063$), ANOVA results ($F=10.824$, $\alpha=0.001$, $p\text{-value}=0.05$), and Coefficients of regression results ($\beta =0.224$, $\alpha=0.001$, $p\text{-value}=0.05$ constant, $\beta_0=13.516$, $\alpha=0.000$, $p\text{-value}=0.05$).

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research design

The researcher adopted cross-sectional survey design using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Cross-sectional survey design is suitable because it gathers information on a population at a single point in time.

3.2 Target population

The target population was drawn from two private sugar companies in Kakamega County, that is, West Kenya and Butali sugar companies. The target population comprised of 70 managers and 250 operational level employees' summing up to 320 respondents. Managers were chosen for the study because they are instrumental in formulating, developing and implementing talent management strategies for effective organization performance. Operative employees were also relevance because they are the one directly affected with talent development and thus are able to relate it with their productivity.

3.4 Sampling design and sample size

Purposive sampling was employed to select the two private sugar companies within Kakamega Company. The study adopted stratified sampling technique to categorize employees in two strata as managers and operatives and then used simple random sampling to select employees among these two categories.

Since the target population, N, is known, the study used Yamane (1967) formula to determine the sample size, n from the study population, N and e, is the probability of error (within the desired precision of 0.05 for 95% confidence level). For example, from a target population of 320, the researcher obtained a sample of 178.

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

$$n = \frac{320}{1 + 320(0.05)^2} = 177.78 \sim 178$$

Table 3.1: Sampling frame

Company	Target Group	Target Population	Sample Size	Percentage from target population
West Kenya	Managers	48	27	56.3%
	Operatives	140	78	55.7%
Butali	Managers	22	12	54.5%
	Operatives	110	61	55.5%
Total		320	178	55.6%

Source of target population: HRM departments: West Kenya and Butali Sugar companies (2016)

3.6 Data collection tools

The study used questionnaires for management and operational level employees and interview schedule for top management to collect data.

3.7 Pilot study

According to Cooper and Schilder (2011), researchers should apply thumb rule of 10% of the sample size in order to calculate the number of respondents to be used for pilot study. The pilot testing was conducted in Kibos Sugar Company Limited which is a private sugar company located in Kisumu County, Kenya. The study sampled 18 respondents for the study which is approximately 10% of the sample size, 178 respondents. 18 respondents composed of 14 operative level employees' and 4 managers. Validity and reliability of the research instruments was realized through pilot testing.

Table 3.2: Reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.834	27

Source: Field data (2016)

Since the obtained reliability is more than 0.7, the recommended in Social Sciences according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2008), there was a high internal consistency of items in questionnaires thus the obtained data was reliable.

3.8 Data analysis and presentation

After data collection, data was edited, coded and entered in SPSS. Descriptive and inferential statistic was used to analyze qualitative and quantitative data respectively (Oso & Onen 2008). Descriptive statistics was aided by use of frequency tables showing the mean, standard variation and variances. Quantitative data was analyzed using Spearman's rank-order correlation to test the strength of relationship between talent development strategy and employees productivity. The research also used Simple Regression Analysis that generated ANOVA, Coefficient of Determination (R²) and Correlation Coefficient (R).

The study utilized the following simple linear regression model;

$$Y = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_1 + e$$

Where;

α_0 = constant which is the value of the dependent variable when all the independent variables are 0.; α_1 is the regression coefficients which measures the change induced by X_1 on Y. X_1 =Talent development Strategy; Y= Employees' Productivity and e =error term.

4. Data analysis and discussions

4.1 Response rate

The researcher administered 178 questionnaires out of which 133 questionnaires were completely filled and collected back as shown on Table 4.1. This represents a 74.72% response rate which is very good as asserted by Bebbie (2004) that a response rate of above 70% is good.

Table 4.1: Respondents response rate

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Successful	133	74.72%
Unsuccessful	45	25.28%
Total	178	100%

Source: Field data (2016)

4.2 Descriptive statistical analysis

The study sought to determine the effect of talent development strategy on employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County. The respondents responses were rated on a five point Likert Scale showing to what extent the respondents agree or disagree to the researcher statements on talent

attraction strategy, where: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree. The researcher interpreted the data using mean (where <1.5=Strongly Disagree, >1.5-2.5=Disagree, 2.5-3.5=Neutral, 3.5-4.5=Agree, >4.5=Strongly Agree) and Standard deviation will be interpreted (where <1= no variation, >1=no consensus). The researcher generated the mean and standard deviation from SPSS as tabulated in Table 4.2.

4.2.1 Talent development strategy and employees' productivity

Table 4.2: Minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation of talent development strategies

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Promotion based on past performance, experience, and ability leads to development of talents	133	1.00	5.00	3.6992	.92920
Provision of equal training opportunity develop talents	133	1.00	5.00	3.5865	1.25606
Succession planning develop a strong talent pool	133	1.00	5.00	3.4511	1.02592
Career development policies are known to workers and applied in our company	133	1.00	5.00	3.3534	1.04588
Valid N (listwise)	133				

Source: Field data (2016)

Results in Table 4.2 show that there was no unusual response from the respondents because the minimum and maximum values are 1 and 5 respectively. This means that the calculated values of mean and standard deviation were not affected by extreme values. Table results show that majority of respondents agreed that talent development occurs in companies that promote their employees based on merit, provide equal training opportunities and have well elaborate succession planning, represented by a mean of 3.70, 3.59 and 3.50 respectively. However, respondents were not sure if talent development strategies were in place in their companies represented by a mean of 3.35.

The results of standard deviation in Table 4.2 show that there was consensus on the outcome of promotion based on experience, past performance, and ability as a way of developing talent in an organization since standard deviation was less than 1, that is, 0.929. This meant that for organizations to develop their key talent, they need to put in place promotion strategies based on past performance, ability, and experience. Standard deviation results also show that there was varied opinion whether equal training opportunity and succession planning leads to talent development and a presence of talent development strategies in the company since there

was no consensus in respondents' responses, shown by a standard deviation of 1.256, 1.026 and 1.046 respectively. Overall, promotion, training, and succession planning lead to the development of employees' talents in an organization which in turn leads to their productivity. These findings as evident in Table 4.2 are in agreement with past studies conducted by Pollit (2009); Topper (2008); Sturgeins *et al* (2001), Rhoades *et al* (2001), Van Dam (2004); Kraimer *et al* (2003); and Agarwal (2007) that found out that talent development occurs in organization that offer promotion, succession planning and training to its employees.

4.4 Inferential statistical analysis

The study sought to determine the relationship that exists between talent development strategy and employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County. Data was analyzed in relation to each research objective by generating correlation and regression coefficients from SPSS version 20 software as tabulated in Tables 4.3 and 4.4. The main aim of correlation analysis was to test the strength and significant of relationship that exist between talent development strategy and employees' productivity and regression analysis was meant to test for research hypothesis, whether to accept or reject.

Table 4.3: Relationship between talent development strategy and employees' productivity

		Employees productivity	Talent development
Spearman's rho	Employees productivity	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1
	Talent development	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.413** .000 133

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Field data (2016)

Study findings result in Table 4.3 show that there is a positive and significant relationship between talent development strategy and employees' productivity in private sugar companies at 99% confidence level (r=0.413, α=0.000 and p-value=0.01 thus α<p-value). The results reveal that sugar company that embraces talent development strategy report improvement in their employees' productivity. Past study findings support this assertion, for example, Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2012); Sturgeins *et al* (2002) and Rhoades *et al* (2001) found out that there is a positive and significant correlation between talent development strategy and employees performance.

Table 4.4: Regression results on talent development strategy and employees' productivity

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.367 ^a	.135	.128	.63528		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Talent development						
ANOVA ^a						
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	8.225	1	8.225	20.380	.000 ^b
	Residual	52.869	131	.404		
	Total	61.093	132			
a. Dependent Variable: Employees productivity						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Talent development						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.383	.276		8.640	.000
	Talent development	.346	.077	.367	4.514	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employees productivity						
Source: Field data (2016)						

Table 4.4 on model summary regression results show that R-Square is 0.135 indicating that 13.5% of the variability in employees' productivity in private sugar companies can be explained by the variability in talent development strategy. The table also shows that there is a high significance influence of talent development strategy on employees' productivity. The correlation coefficient of 0.367 shows that there is a positive relationship between talent development strategy and employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County thus concur with Sturgeins *et al* (2002); Rhoades *et al* (2001); Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2012) findings which found that there is a positive relationship between talent development and employees performance.

Table 4.4 ANOVA regression result was used to examine the significance of the overall regression model in order to determine the feasibility or applicability of the model to measure the study variables. This means that the overall regression model is feasible in measuring the relationship between talent development and employees' productivity show by an F-value of which is significant at 95% level of significance (F=20.38, $\alpha = 0.000$ and p-value=0.05 thus $\alpha < p$ -value). The results show that there is a satisfactory goodness of fit between employees' productivity and talent development strategy. Regression analysis results in Table 4.4 on regression coefficient reveal to which extent talent development strategies predict employees' productivity. Based on the study results, the equation for simple linear regression model was in the form of; $Y = 2.383 + 0.346X + e$. A beta of 0.346 means that every 0.346 units of use of talent development strategies, leads to a corresponding 1 unit in employees' productivity.

The results also show that talent development strategy is statistically significant ($\alpha = 0.000$ and p-

value=0.05 thus $\alpha < p$ -value) in explaining employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County, Kenya. The study, therefore, is consistent with past studies of Sturgeins *et al* (2002); Rhoades *et al* (2001); Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2012) findings that found out that there is a positive and significant relationship between talent development strategy and employees performance.

The results of the regression on Table 4.4 was used to test the research hypothesis, "Ho: Talent development strategy has no significant effect of on employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County, Kenya". The null hypothesis of the study was therefore rejected at 0.05 significant level since the beta value was not equal to 0 ($\beta \neq 0, 0.346 \neq 0$). The study thus concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between talent development strategy and employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County.

5. Summary, conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Summary of major findings

The study sought to examine the effect of talent development strategy on employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County. The study employed a null hypothesis of, Ho: Talent development strategy has no significant effect of on employees' productivity in private sugar companies in Kakamega County, Kenya. The study found out that talent development occurs in private sugar companies that promote their employees based on merit, provide equal training opportunities and have well elaborate succession planning thus leading to high employees' productivity represented by respondents' agreement shown by a mean of 3.5 and above. However, the study also found out that the selected sugar companies either have inadequate talent development strategy in place or there was no management goodwill to implement the existing talent development strategy represented by a mean of 3.35.

The correlation results reveal that there is a positive and significant relationship between talent development strategy and employees' productivity at 99% confidence level thus sugar companies that embrace talent development strategy have improvements in their employees' productivity. ANOVA results reveal that the overall regression model was feasible in measuring talent development strategy and employees' productivity. Regression analysis results also confirm that talent retention strategy predict employees' productivity because the beta coefficient was not equal to zero. The study thus rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there is a significant and positive relationship between talent development strategy and employees' productivity at 95% confidence level.

5.2 Conclusions

It can also be concluded that the sampled private sugar companies in Kakamega County have no adequate development strategies in place and where they exist, there is a lack of goodwill to implement than leading to low employees' productivity. It was also concluded that talent development strategy is statistically and positively related to employees' productivity.

5.3 Recommendations

Private sugar companies in Kakamega County should put in place talent development strategies because the study found out that private sugar companies with talent development strategies have high employees' productivity. These strategies should be implemented, continuously reviewed and evaluated according to changes taking place in the sugar industry. Talent development strategy identified by the study entail: Promotion based on employees' merit, provision of equal training opportunities and putting in place an elaborate succession planning.

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