

Impact of Cultural Practices on Employee Retention Strategies: A Case Study of Organizations in Bungoma County

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Abstract- *This study investigated the impact of cultural practices on employee retention strategies in organizations within Bungoma County, Kenya. Using a descriptive research design, the study collected data from 345 respondents across 30 organizations through questionnaires and interviews. The research examined the relationship between cultural practices such as community obligations, traditional ceremonies, and age-based hierarchy, and their influence on employee retention. Findings revealed a strong positive correlation between cultural practices and employee retention ($r=0.68$, $p=0.001$), with community obligations emerging as the most significant cultural factor influencing retention decisions. The study found that while organizations heavily implemented conventional retention strategies (72%), cultural integration strategies remained significantly underutilized (43%). Regression analysis indicated that cultural practices explained 64.8% of the variance in employee retention rates. The research recommends that organizations develop culturally sensitive retention strategies and establish clear policies accommodating cultural practices. The findings contribute to the understanding of how cultural practices influence employee retention and provide practical insights for HR practitioners in developing effective retention strategies within culturally diverse workplaces.*

Indexed Terms- *Cultural practices, Employee retention, Human resource management, Organizational culture, Bungoma County*

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizations worldwide are increasingly recognizing the significant influence of cultural practices on workplace dynamics and employee retention

strategies. In Kenya, particularly Bungoma County, the intersection of traditional cultural practices and modern human resource management presents unique challenges for organizations (Nyaura, 2020). Cultural practices, which encompass beliefs, values, customs, and social behaviors, have been found to significantly impact employee decisions regarding their continued employment with organizations (Mwangi & Kwasira, 2020). Research by Kiboi et al. (2019) indicates that organizations in Western Kenya face retention challenges due to the strong influence of traditional practices such as communal obligations, cultural ceremonies, and hierarchical social structures.

Employee retention has become a critical concern for organizations in Bungoma County and Kenya at large. According to the Institute of Human Resource Management Kenya (2019), employee turnover rates in Western Kenya organizations have remained consistently higher than other regions. Despite implementing various retention strategies, organizations continue to struggle with maintaining a stable workforce, particularly when these strategies conflict with local cultural values and practices. Research by Musyoka and Mutua (2018) reveals that conventional retention approaches often fail to consider the unique cultural context of different regions, leading to their reduced effectiveness. The challenge is further complicated by the limited understanding of how cultural practices specifically influence employee retention decisions in the local context.

This study is particularly significant as it addresses a crucial gap in understanding the relationship between cultural practices and employee retention strategies in Bungoma County. Previous research by Wangila and Simiyu (2020) suggests that organizations that align their retention strategies with local cultural practices

experience improved employee retention rates. As noted by Kiprono and Kimutai (2019), there is limited empirical evidence specifically examining this relationship in the context of Western Kenya's unique cultural landscape. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for HR practitioners and organizational leaders in developing culturally sensitive retention strategies that effectively address local needs while maintaining organizational efficiency.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), explains how individuals develop their sense of self through group membership and cultural affiliations. In organizational contexts, this theory suggests that employees' cultural identities significantly influence their workplace behavior and commitment levels. According to Hogg and Terry (2018), employees often align their organizational commitment with their cultural group's values and expectations, affecting their retention decisions. The theory provides a framework for understanding how cultural identification impacts workplace relationships and employee loyalty.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (1983) offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing how national and regional cultures influence organizational behavior. His dimensions, particularly power distance and collectivism, are especially relevant in the African context. Kamoche (2018) applied Hofstede's framework to Kenyan organizations, finding that high power distance and collectivistic values significantly influence employee-employer relationships. This theory helps explain why certain retention strategies may be more effective in specific cultural contexts.

The Organization-Person Fit Theory, proposed by Kristof (1996), emphasizes the importance of alignment between organizational values and individual characteristics. Studies by Muchiri (2020) in Kenyan organizations demonstrate that when employees perceive a strong fit between their cultural values and organizational practices, they show higher retention rates. This theory provides insights into why culturally aligned retention strategies may be more effective.

Empirical Review

Several studies have examined cultural practices in organizational contexts. Mwangi and Kwasira (2020) studied 200 employees in Western Kenya, finding that traditional practices significantly influence workplace expectations and behavior. Their research revealed that communal obligations, respect for age-based hierarchy, and cultural ceremonies often take precedence over organizational commitments. Similarly, Nyaura (2020) found that organizations failing to acknowledge these cultural practices experienced higher turnover rates.

Research on employee retention strategies in Kenya has yielded significant insights. Kiboi et al. (2019) conducted a study across 15 organizations in Western Kenya, identifying key retention factors including compensation, work-life balance, and career development opportunities. However, Musyoka and Mutua (2018) found that conventional retention strategies often fail when they conflict with local cultural values. Their study of 150 employees showed that culturally insensitive retention practices led to increased turnover intentions.

Studies linking culture and retention have demonstrated strong correlations. Wangila and Simiyu (2020) surveyed 300 employees in various organizations across Western Kenya, finding that cultural alignment in HR practices resulted in 25% lower turnover rates. Research by Kiprono and Kimutai (2019) further revealed that organizations that incorporated local cultural practices into their retention strategies experienced improved employee satisfaction and loyalty. These studies emphasize the importance of cultural consideration in retention strategy development.

Another significant study by Kamoche and Siebers (2020) examined how multinational corporations in Kenya adapted their retention strategies to local cultural contexts. Their findings indicated that successful adaptation of retention strategies to local cultural practices led to improved employee commitment and reduced turnover intentions. This research highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in retention strategy formulation and implementation.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the impact of cultural practices on employee retention strategies in Bungoma County. The descriptive design was suitable as it allowed for a comprehensive examination of the relationship between cultural practices and retention strategies while capturing both statistical data and in-depth insights from participants.

The target population consisted of employees and HR managers from 30 registered organizations in Bungoma County, including both public and private sector institutions. These organizations were selected based on their size (minimum of 50 employees) and operational duration of at least five years in the region. The total target population comprised 2,500 employees and 45 HR managers.

Using Yamane's formula with a 95% confidence level, a sample size of 345 respondents was determined. Stratified random sampling was used to select employees across different organizational levels, while purposive sampling was employed to select HR managers. This sampling approach ensured representation across various organizational hierarchies and sectors.

Data collection utilized structured questionnaires for employees and semi-structured interviews for HR managers. The questionnaires employed a five-point Likert scale to measure variables related to cultural practices and retention strategies. Additionally, interviews with HR managers provided detailed insights into retention challenges and cultural considerations in HR practices.

For data analysis, quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 26.0, employing descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and percentages) and inferential statistics (correlation and regression analysis) to establish relationships between variables. Qualitative data from interviews was analyzed thematically to identify patterns and insights regarding cultural practices and retention strategies. This mixed analysis approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives.

IV. FINDINGS

Research Results Based on Objectives

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=345)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	198	57.4
	Female	147	42.6
Age	20-30 years	95	27.5
	31-40 years	156	45.2
	Above 40 years	94	27.3
Work Experience	1-5 years	123	35.7
	6-10 years	142	41.2
	Above 10 years	80	23.1

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The majority of participants were male (57.4%) compared to female (42.6%), indicating a gender imbalance in the organizations studied. Age distribution shows that most respondents (45.2%) were between 31-40 years, suggesting a predominantly mid-career workforce. Work experience data reveals that 41.2% of respondents had 6-10 years of experience, indicating a relatively experienced workforce in the surveyed organizations.

Analysis of Cultural Practices

Table 2: Prevalent Cultural Practices Affecting Employee Retention (N=345)

Cultural Practice	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Community obligations	4.2	0.76
Traditional ceremonies	3.9	0.82
Age-based hierarchy	3.8	0.88
Extended family responsibilities	3.7	0.91
Cultural leadership roles	3.5	0.85

Scale: 1=Not Important, 5=Very Important

Table 2 illustrates the prevalence of cultural practices affecting employee retention. Community obligations emerged as the most significant cultural practice with a mean score of 4.2, followed by traditional ceremonies (3.9) and age-based hierarchy (3.8). Extended family responsibilities and cultural leadership roles also showed substantial influence with mean scores of 3.7 and 3.5 respectively. These findings suggest that community-based cultural practices have a strong influence on employee retention decisions.

Analysis of Retention Strategies

Table 3: Effectiveness of Current Retention Strategies (N=345)

Strategy	Effectiveness Rating	Implementation Level
Competitive compensation	3.8	72%
Career development	3.5	65%
Work-life balance	3.3	58%
Recognition programs	3.1	51%
Cultural integration	2.8	43%

Scale: 1=Least Effective, 5=Most Effective

Table 3 examines the effectiveness of current retention strategies implemented by organizations. Competitive compensation emerged as the most effective strategy with a rating of 3.8 and the highest implementation level of 72%. Career development and work-life balance showed moderate effectiveness with ratings of 3.5 and 3.3 respectively. Notably, cultural integration strategies received the lowest effectiveness rating (2.8) with only 43% implementation, suggesting a significant gap in organizations' approach to cultural considerations.

Relationship between Cultural Practices and Retention

Table 4: Correlation Analysis of Cultural Practices and Employee Retention

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
Community obligations	0.68	0.001
Traditional ceremonies	0.57	0.002
Age-based hierarchy	0.52	0.003
Extended family responsibilities	0.49	0.004
Cultural leadership roles	0.45	0.005

- Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

Table 4 presents correlation analysis results between cultural practices and employee retention. The analysis reveals strong positive correlations for all cultural practices, with community obligations showing the strongest relationship ($r=0.68$, $p=0.001$). Traditional ceremonies ($r=0.57$) and age-based hierarchy ($r=0.52$) also demonstrated significant correlations. These results indicate that cultural practices have a substantial influence on employee retention decisions.

Table 5: Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Beta Coefficient	t-value	P-value
Cultural practices (aggregate)	0.625	8.245	0.001
Retention strategies	0.543	7.632	0.002
Cultural integration in HR practices	0.487	6.954	0.003

$R^2 = 0.648$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.635$

Table 5 provides regression analysis results demonstrating the predictive power of cultural practices on retention outcomes. The analysis reveals that cultural practices significantly predict employee retention ($\beta=0.625$, $p=0.001$). The model explains 64.8% of the variance in retention rates ($R^2=0.648$), with cultural integration in HR practices also showing significant influence ($\beta=0.487$, $p=0.003$). These findings emphasize the crucial role of cultural considerations in retention strategies.

V. DISCUSSION

The study findings reveal significant relationships between cultural practices and employee retention strategies in Bungoma County organizations. The strong influence of community obligations on retention decisions aligns with research by Mwangi and Kwasira (2020), who found that communal responsibilities significantly impact employee workplace decisions in Western Kenya. The high mean score for community obligations (4.2) demonstrates the continued importance of traditional social structures in modern organizational settings, supporting Nyaura's (2020) findings on the persistence of cultural influences in Kenyan workplaces.

The relatively low implementation rate of cultural integration strategies (43%) indicates a significant gap in organizations' approach to retention. This finding corresponds with Musyoka and Mutua's (2018) research, which identified a disconnect between organizational practices and local cultural values in Kenyan organizations. The strong correlation between community obligations and retention ($r=0.68$) supports Kiboi et al.'s (2019) assertion that traditional community ties significantly influence employee loyalty and retention decisions.

Traditional ceremonies and age-based hierarchy emerged as significant factors affecting retention, with correlation coefficients of 0.57 and 0.52 respectively. These findings align with Kamoche's (2018) application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions in Kenyan organizations, particularly regarding power distance and collectivism. The regression analysis showing cultural practices explaining 64.8% of variance in retention rates reinforces Wangila and Simiyu's (2020) findings on the importance of cultural alignment in retention strategies.

The implications for HR practice are substantial. As noted by Muchiri (2020), organizations need to develop culturally sensitive retention strategies that acknowledge and accommodate local practices. The findings suggest that HR practitioners should integrate cultural considerations into their retention approaches, supporting Kiprono and Kimutai's (2019) recommendations for culturally aligned HR practices. Furthermore, the low implementation rate of cultural

integration strategies indicates a need for organizations to reassess their approach to cultural considerations in retention planning.

The dominance of competitive compensation as the most implemented retention strategy (72%) while cultural integration remains low (43%) suggests that organizations still prioritize conventional retention approaches over cultural considerations. This aligns with Kamoche and Siebers' (2020) observations about the challenges organizations face in balancing modern HR practices with local cultural expectations. The findings indicate a clear need for organizations to develop more balanced approaches that incorporate both modern retention strategies and cultural considerations.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, organizations in Bungoma County should develop flexible work policies that accommodate important cultural practices, particularly community obligations and traditional ceremonies. Organizations should establish clear policies for cultural leave and create a supportive environment that recognizes the significance of cultural responsibilities. Additionally, organizations should integrate cultural awareness into their retention strategies by developing culturally sensitive compensation packages and recognition programs that align with local values and practices.

HR practitioners should invest in cultural competency training for management and staff to enhance understanding of local cultural practices and their impact on employee behavior. They should conduct regular cultural assessments to identify specific cultural practices affecting their workforce and develop targeted retention strategies accordingly. Furthermore, HR practitioners should establish mentorship programs that respect age-based hierarchies while promoting knowledge transfer and professional development within the organization.

Future research should explore the economic impact of cultural integration in retention strategies through longitudinal studies to measure long-term effectiveness. Research should also investigate the role of modernization in changing cultural practices

and their influence on employee retention. Additionally, comparative studies across different counties in Kenya would provide valuable insights into regional variations in cultural influences on retention strategies. Finally, research should examine the intersection of gender, culture, and retention strategies, particularly in traditionally patriarchal communities.

CONCLUSION

The study has demonstrated a significant relationship between cultural practices and employee retention in organizations within Bungoma County. Key findings revealed that community obligations, traditional ceremonies, and age-based hierarchy strongly influence employee retention decisions, with correlation coefficients of 0.68, 0.57, and 0.52 respectively. The research also highlighted a considerable gap in cultural integration within current retention strategies, with only 43% of organizations implementing culturally aligned practices despite their proven effectiveness.

The implications of these findings suggest that organizations need to fundamentally rethink their approach to employee retention by incorporating cultural considerations into their HR strategies. The study revealed that while organizations heavily emphasize conventional retention methods such as competitive compensation (72% implementation), they significantly underutilize cultural integration strategies. This imbalance affects their ability to effectively retain employees in a culturally diverse environment.

Cultural practices continue to play a vital role in shaping employee decisions and organizational commitment in Bungoma County. The success of retention strategies largely depends on their alignment with local cultural values and practices. Organizations that recognize and accommodate these cultural elements in their retention strategies are better positioned to maintain a stable and committed workforce. As workplaces continue to evolve, the integration of cultural practices into retention strategies will become increasingly crucial for organizational success in this region.

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