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**Abdikadir Ore Ahmed, Dr. Dinah Keino & Dr. Paul
Machoka**

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Intervening Effect of Employee Retention on the Relationship between Strategic Leadership and Performance of Health Care Workers in North Eastern Kenya

^{1*}Abdikadir Ore Ahmed, ²Dr. Dinah Keino & ³Dr. Paul Machoka
Post Graduate Student, The Management University of Africa

^{2,3}Lecturers, School of Management and Leadership, The Management University of Africa

*Email of the corresponding author: munzil2000@gmail.com

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Abstract

The efficiency of the healthcare workers determines the overall performance in a healthcare setting. The performance of the employees can be affected by internal and external factors. Thus, the study sought to examine the intervening effect of employee retention on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of health care workers in north eastern Kenya. The study was anchored on job embeddedness theory. The research study adopted a correlation research design. The study target population was 3,000 Health care workers and 10 County leadership who included health managers working with County Health Department of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera. The sample size for the health care workers was 353 obtained using Yamane Formular. A census was undertaken for the health managers in the counties. Questionnaires were used to collect the data. Both descriptive and inferential analysis was done on the collected data. The study findings indicated there is a partial intervening effect of employee retention on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of health care workers in North Eastern Counties of Kenya. The study concluded employee retention is influenced by employee empowerment, recognition, and remuneration. The regression model of strategic leadership on health worker performance was positively and significantly related. The study recommended the need of encouraging the health workers to remain in North Eastern regions despite the circumstances. There is a need of the county governments and other health care stakeholders to emphasize empowerment, recognition, remuneration and training and development of the health care workers.

Keywords: *Employee Retention, Strategic Leadership, Performance, Health Care Workers, Kenya*

1.0 Background of the Study

The performance of the employees influences the overall performance of an organization (Ali & Ahmed, 2009). The performance of the employees, such as the healthcare workers, can be affected by internal and external factors (Acha, Hargiss & Howard, 2013). The performance of the employees can be as a result of the employee retention. Employee retention is a process in which employees are encouraged to stay with the organization for as long as possible or until the project is completed (Kaur, 2017). Retention Strategies assists organizations in providing effective employee communication in order to improve commitment and workforce support for key corporate initiatives. When these policies are organized and disseminated in a user-friendly format, they can help to prevent many misunderstandings between employees and employers about their rights and obligations in the workplace. It is tempting for a new small business owner to put off developing a human resource policy (Kaur, 2017). Employee retention refers to an organization's ability to keep its employees even when external opportunities are available. With proper retention methods, the leadership must conduct a continuous analysis of the types and causes of turnover (Al-Emadi, Ahmed, Schwabenland & Wei, 2015).

WHO (2013) places Kenya is among the countries with low numbers of health staff in particular Midwives, Nurses and Doctors which is lower that World health organization standard of a minimum threshold of 23 staff per 10 000 population to provide quality services. When employees are retained, it is indicative of good working conditions which enhance organizational performance. Kariuki (2014) states that a shortage of critical staff is caused by high rates of turn over by medical personnel resulting from low morale. The county public service board who are tasked recruitment and grading of health personnel work under the direction and whims of county executive who appoints them. Staff who work in peripheral hard to reach health facilities and long serving staff are not rewarded but new and junior staff with little experienced take over leadership and thus resulting in low retention of highly skilled and experienced staff. In the Health facilities staff from other parts of Kenya who constitute majority of workforce face security threats, harsh living environment they are not used to, culture shock and local community not being receptive. Employee motivation impacts employee retention as well as various other habits within companies.

Improving worker retention begins with employing the best individual (Knaus, Lechner & Strittmatter, 2022). These needs specifying the job itself obligations, required skills, work environment and establishing a fine-tuned job summary that brings in ideal candidates. When an organization has picked a new hire, orientation and onboarding are crucial to making them feel welcome. A well-planned and orderly onboarding program has been revealed to boost worker retention, interaction and dedication (Ghartey, 2018). Career development and growth chances are various other important aspects of employee retention, as is acknowledgment for their contributions (Hadi & Ahmed, 2018). Gandhi, Yu and Grabowski (2021) argued that the most successful employee retention programs accumulate and examine a wide range of information, consisting of employee satisfaction and interaction, more nuanced retention and turn over information, and various other concerns like absenteeism.

The high retention of employees in a specific organization demonstrates that workers are satisfied with the terms of services in an organization. An effective retention strategy necessitates that the organization's leadership continuously diagnose the nature and causes of turnover and develop solutions (Aguenza & Mat Som's, 2018). Furthermore, Hunjra, Raza, and Munir (2014) discovered that employee retention and productivity are positively related to organizational performance. According to Aguenza and Mat Som (2018), employee retention stems from motivation, which improves performance. According to Kossivi and Kalgora (2016), there is no strong relationship between retention and work performance. An effective worker retention method is an essential component of a comprehensive human capital management method in all sectors (Krishnaveni & Monica, 2018).

In Kenya currently the health sector faces big challenges in overcoming health worker shortages in terms of retention and equitable distribution with North Eastern Counties most affected (Ojokaa, Olango and Jarvis, 2014). North eastern counties of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera are characterized by poor health indicators, shortage of health care staff and poor conditions for the few remaining health care workers. Prior to devolution, the frontier counties of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera counties were barely allocated funds for health services with almost all national government budget used to maintain security. Upon devolving health services, the management human resource, budgeting, and developing local legislation is largely managed by the county leadership with technical support from the health department heads. However, in North eastern the situation has not improved with poor working conditions of Health care workers, high turnover and many health facilities closed. Patients dying in Hospital corridors or mother delivering unattended to is a norm.

Episodes of diseases remain widespread and native in Mandera, Garissa and Wajir, worsened by minimal access to health services. The five leading common root causes of morbidity for children under five and the general population were: conditions of the breathing system, pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria and skin diseases (Gichuna, Hassan, Sanders, Campbell, Mutonyi & Mwangi, 2020). There was a reported increase of Upper Respiratory Tract Infections (URTI) in Mandera amongst under-five and the general population, credited to incidences of poor sanitation, deficiency of water and inadequate hygiene practices. Cholera remains a relentless worry in north Kenya. Access to health care in regions influenced by instability is limited by the closure of numerous healthcare centers due to a lack of sufficient staff (Ochieng, 2022). The departure of vast numbers of health workers in north Kenya was caused by insecurity adversely influencing the quality of health and nutrition services stipulation in most health care centers and community health employees are delegated to provide health services. 11 of 26 health care facilities in Mandera have shut down since personnel has left the area (Ibrahim, 2019). Because of instability, a scheduled polio vaccination campaign in north Kenya had to be called off indefinitely. Minimal Humanitarian accessibility in the NEP has likewise impacted life-saving nutrition interventions and preventative high-impact nutrition services in northeastern Kenya.

Chepkorir, Tchouassi, Konongoi, Lutomiah, Tigoi, Irura and Sang (2019) discovered several push and pull variables that affect the accessibility and circulation of health employees in Northern Kenya. These variables consist of bad working conditions, low

remuneration, adverse environmental conditions, and unsafe workplace, among other aspects within the research sites that 'pushed' health employees away to other sites that 'drew' health employees with elements such as much better reimbursement, presence of equipment and materials and better ecological conditions, among others. These are concerning that Kenya's two health Ministries Ministry of Medical Services (MOMS) and the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation (MOPHS and the Ministry for the Development of Northern Kenya and Various Other Arid Lands (MDONKAL) are aware of and several policy efforts are being created to deal with the problem. Nevertheless, there is a demand for thorough information on the HRH condition in Northern Kenya, with an enhanced focus on the following locations of interest: pre-service training, employment, release and retention of healthcare workers (HW) in North Kenya. Thus, the study examined the intervening effect of employee retention on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of health care workers in North Eastern Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The health sector in North Eastern Counties has been facing healthcare worker shortages (Ojokaa, Olango and Jarvis, 2014). Prior to devolution, the counties of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera counties were barely allocated funds for health services with almost all national government budget used to maintain security. Upon devolving health services, the management human resource, budgeting, and developing local legislation is largely managed by the county leadership with technical support from the health department heads. However, in North eastern the situation has not improved with poor working conditions of Health care workers, high turnover and many health facilities closed. Patients dying in Hospital corridors or mother delivering unattended to is a norm. Episodes of diseases remain widespread and native in Mandera, Garissa and Wajir, worsened by minimal access to health services. The five leading common root causes of morbidity for children under five and the general population were: conditions of the breathing system, pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria and skin diseases (Gichuna, Hassan, Sanders, Campbell, Mutonyi & Mwangi, 2020). The performance within some public hospitals in Northeastern counties has been dismal, leading to loss of life. For instance, the infant mortality rate in Garissa County was 54.96 in 2015, 54.59 in 2016, 54.02 in 2017, 54.12 in 2018 and 54.08 in 2019 (United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, 2020). Moreover, the infant mortality rate in Wajir County was 42 in 2015, 41.18 in 2016, 41.02 in 2017, 41.26 in 2018 and 40.84 in 2019 (United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, 2020).

Based on the reviewed studies, the influence of strategic leadership and employee retention on the performance of health care workers in North Eastern Counties of Kenya is under-researched. For instance, Kabetu and Iravo (2018) carried out a study on the influence of critical leadership on the efficiency of worldwide humanitarian companies in Kenya. The study was focused on humanitarian companies while the current focused on healthcare workers, thus a contextual gap. Moreover, Tsofa *et al.* (2017) carried out a study on devolution and how it affects the health workforce and commodities in Kilifi County. The study highlighted the challenges that arose due to government influence. Nonetheless, the study only focused on devolution while the current focused on strategic leadership, employee retention and health care regulation, thus a conceptual gap. Further, Otworu and

Muturi (2019) examine the impact of tactical management on the performance of insurance companies in Kenya. The study was done in the insurance companies, thus a contextual gap. Further, Okebiro (2014) studied the influence of leadership and governance in pastoral communities in Kenya, with the objective of coming up with ways of shielding and promoting the rights of pastoralists.

In addition, another study was conducted by Koros (2021) to examine the effect of strategic leadership methods on the performance of the Kenya National Highway Authority. The study presents a contextual gap since it was conducted in National Highway Authority, while the current was conducted in the health sector. In addition, Maina (2019) carried out a study to examine strategic management techniques and its effect on the efficiency of NGOs in Kenya. The study presents a contextual gap since it was conducted in NGOs while the current was conducted in the health care sector. Thus, there was a need for further studies. Hence, the knowledge gap was ascertained by examining the intervening effect of employee retention on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of health care workers in North Eastern Kenya.

1.2 Research Objective

To examine the intervening effect of employee retention on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of health care workers in North Eastern Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

The study was guided by Job Embeddedness Theory. Economic historian Karl Polanyi created the theory in 1944 as part of his substantive approach. The Job embeddedness Theory posits that workers will remain in the organization as long as their expectations at work are continuously met or even exceeded (Halbesleben, & Wheeler, 2008). Job embeddedness affects worker's decision to whether stay in the organization or go. By being embedded in a job, the individual is less likely to leave the organization and therefore lead to a positive result on their performance. According to Job Embeddedness Concept, when workers are much more ingrained within their company, they are much less likely to give up. Unlike simpler measures of work contentment or self-reports of involvement, job embeddedness checks out three elements of the worker-company partnership. Although job embeddedness theory reveals promise for various applications within HR and organizational techniques, there are some potential unfavorable aspects to consider. Since job embeddedness emphasizes employee retention, there might be circumstances in which people feel bound to their position and related responsibilities (Allen, Peltokorpi & Rubenstein, 2016). In some instances, employee turnover may be better for maintaining people who do not wish to be utilized at an organization or who do not find themselves an excellent suit for organizational values.

The theory notes that the motive of an employee to remain in an organization is majorly influenced by internal factors (Hunter & Thatcher, 2007). Internal factors such as the leadership of the organization and the nature of the working environment can influence the motivations of the workers to continue working in the organization. In that regard, organizations ought to ensure that employees are embedded since it leads to employee

retention (Ratnawati, Sukidjo & Efendi, 2020). Quite a several factors will lead to the embedment, for example, good working relationships, correct placement, and appropriate supervision, among others. This theory is appropriate to the study because sound leadership will assist employees realize the expectations and thus desire to continue working in the organization. Strategic leadership develops human capital by managing, motivating and persuading workers to share that same vision (Kahiga, 2017). This enhances employee loyalty and satisfaction, and thus retention. Effective leadership can develop policies conducive to the employees, thus continuing being motivated to continue being in the organization.

To avoid extreme application of the job embeddedness concept, institutions are required to define specific success metrics, along with any kind of prospective circumstances in which embeddedness is not preferable (Felps, Mitchell, Hekman, Lee, Holtom & Harman, 2009). Initiatives to enhance work embeddedness need to be balanced considering overall institution objectives and capacities. Equally, as worker turnover can adversely impact an institution's profit and stability, so can excessively pandering or accommodation of workers influence the institution's ROI. Plainly, job embeddedness concept gives several useful applications to human resources departments and companies seeing boost in worker retention and decrease the threat of extreme turnover. The balance should be preserved in between job embeddedness efforts and overall ROI (Zhang, Fried & Griffeth, 2012). Nevertheless, study seems to suggest a positive overview for those institutions that accept the metrics of fit, links, and sacrifice to recognize areas where people may gain from tasks or initiatives geared towards job embeddedness.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Employee retention is the ability of an organization to keep its employees even when there is availability of external opportunities (Eckert, 2013). Effective retention methods demand for the organization leadership to have a continuous examination of the nature and causes of turnover and develop remedies. Employers use several strategies to enhance employee retention including among others, socialization, effectively communicating organization's vision and mission to employees, being customer centered, training and development, employee acknowledgement, rewards and compensation, and leadership (Yahaya, 2016). In order to enhance productivity and reduce recruitment costs, organizations are required to have effective employee retention methods which ensures the best workers are kept, this is common in the health sector where staff shortage is rampant. Employee retention has been found to enhance recruitment savings and a direct relationship with superior work performance (Ombija, 2018). Organization leadership plays a significant role in employee retention (Jang, & Kandampully, 2018). (Snell, Bohlander, & Morris (2015) claim that an organization that has effective leadership that strategically manages human resources will have higher levels of employee retention.

Hassan et al. (2021) performed a study on the influence of routine promotion on healthcare workers retention in public health centers in Garissa County, Kenya. The study used a descriptive research design as well as Self-Administered Survey to gather information from 134 health care workers. Stratified sampling as well as Simple random sampling techniques were used to example the Sub-Counties, Main health care facilities, and also participants respectively. Data were examined making use of SPSS version 26 and the relationships

between the variables were established using correlation and several regression analyses. The relationship results revealed that routine promotion was positively associated to retention of medical care workers in key medical care centers in Garissa County. Regression analysis also showed that routine promotion influenced retention of health care employees in the County. The study concluded that regular promotion, influenced retention of healthcare workers in primary healthcare facilities in Garissa County.

According to Agustina, Rarastanti, and Hidayat (2021), the direct influence of job stress on the job performance of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, with burnout as a mediating variable. This study takes a cross-sectional approach, using a questionnaire to collect data from 194 healthcare workers at Aisyiyah Ponorogo General Hospital Indonesia. The results of the Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Square show that job stress has a negative influence on the job performance of healthcare workers, job stress has a positive effect on the burnout of healthcare workers, and burnout is found to partially mediate the effect of job stress on the job performance of healthcare workers. In addition, another study was conducted by Koros (2021) to examine the effect of strategic leadership methods on the performance of Kenya National Highway Authority. The study deployed descriptive survey design. The study targeted 11 workplaces of Kenya National Highway Authority. Structured questionnaires were made used of in the collection of primary data. Descriptive as well as inferential statistics were used in the evaluation of data with the help of SPSS software version 22. The outcomes showed that strategic leadership has positive substantial impact on organizational efficiency at Kenya National Highway Authority.

Moreover, Kim *et al.* (2020) conducted a study to examine how social support affects the job engagement as well as work retention purpose of registered nurses struggling in the continuing scenes of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research used a sample size of 382 nurses as participants, data from 377 of whom were analyzed in overall. The research revealed that nurses' work interaction as well as task retention intent were high, depending on their age and work experience. Additionally, the research study located that in terms of the variables associated with COVID-19, the group with experience in nursing people contaminated with COVID-19 as well as nurses working in COVID-19 divisions had reduced work retention intent. Lastly, it appeared that there were distinctions in job involvement and also work retention intention depending upon the classification and kind of social assistance. Al Mheiri, Jabeen and Abdallah (2021) investigated talent retention barriers in UAE public healthcare. The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) methodology was used in the study to rank factors influencing talent retention. The AHP model extrapolated from the literature 6 criteria and 19 sub-criteria. Data was gathered through interviews with 18 employees from UAE-based public healthcare units, divided into three groups: administrators, medical staff, and medical researchers. According to the study, administrators believe that recognition is the most important factor in retaining employees. The highest priority factor for medical staff is career development and succession planning. For researchers, the most important factor in employee retention was sustainable practices.

Agyepong *et al.* (2018) conducted a study to examined the strategic management ability structure for Sub-Saharan African health systems and public health governance. The research study employed a blended approaches cross sectional multi-country research that

was carried out in Ghana, South Africa and Uganda. Information collection included a non-exhaustive desk testimonial, 34 key source (KI) interviews with past and also existing wellness field leaders and a questionnaire with closed as well as open-ended items carried out to 271 possible DrPH trainees. The study observed that strategic management expertises identified by KI consisted of offering vision as well as inspiration for the company, core personal values as well as character high qualities such as stability as well as trustworthiness, abilities in adapting to situations and also context and creating and keeping efficient adjustment as well as systems. Moreover, the research found that introduction of a pan-African DrPH with a concentrate on calculated leadership is relevant and also timely. It additionally developed that core expertises, optimal design and personalization for the sub-Saharan African context has wide agreement in the study setting.

A study by Owek, Machoka and Aseka (2021) indicated that workers motivation has a substantial mediating influence on the relationship between strategic leadership practices and the performance of health facility-based youth centers in the Counties of Kenya. The research suggested the facility management to provide fair payment to workers. Hunjra, Raza and Munir, (2014) showed that employee retention and employee productivity are positively related to organizational performance. Aguenza, and Mat Som’s (2018) survey on Motivational Factors of Employee Retention and Participation in Organizations. This paper confirms that employee retention arises from motivation which further enhances performance. A Study on Determining Factors of Employee Retention by Kossivi and Kalgora (2016) did not get any strong relationship between retention and work performance. The study concluded that further studies should be performed on employee retention to better comprehend the complex sector of human resource management.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a diagrammatical representation which indicates the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Creswell, 2014). Figure 1 shows a conceptual framework that reveals the relationship between the variables. Strategic leadership is employed as the independent variable, employee retention as intervening variable and performance of health care workers as the dependent variable.

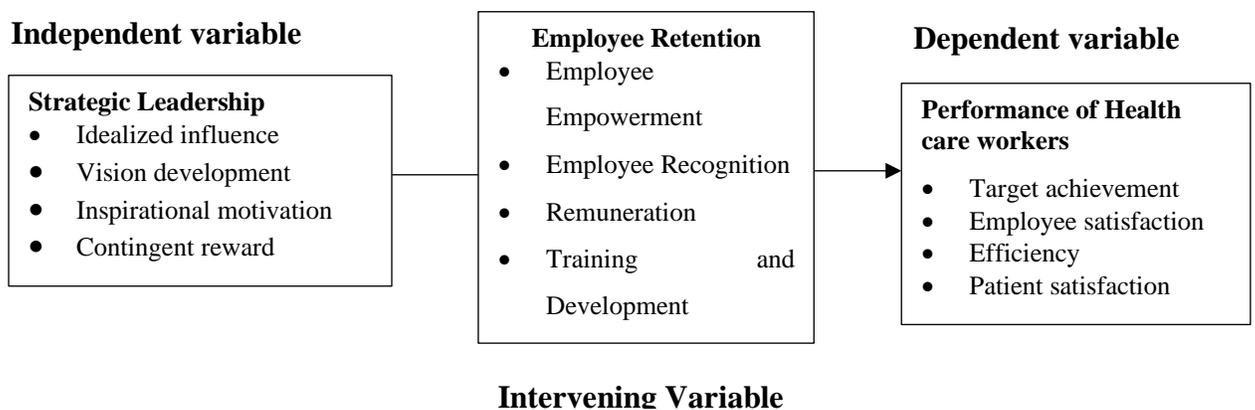


Figure 1: Conceptual frame work

3.0 Research Methodology

The Positivism philosophy was adopted to enable gathering and processing of data and to allow for more objective outcome. The research study adopted a correlation research design. The choice of the correlation research design was motivated since the study sought to examine the effect of the variables. The study target population was 3,000 Health care workers and 10 County leadership who included health managers working with County Health Department of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera. The sample size of health care workers was 353 that was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula. The study conducted a census for the managers. Stratified sampling method was used to select the participants. Questionnaires were used to collect the data. The study utilized quantitative data analysis techniques.

4.0 Data Analysis and Research Results

4.1 Response Rate

Questionnaires were administered to the health care workers in the counties of Garissa, Mandera and Wajir were 353. Out of the 353 respondents, 316 questionnaires were duly filled and returned as presented in Table 1

Table 1: Response Rate

Response	Response Distribution	Percentage
Administered Questionnaire	353	100%
Returned	316	89.52%
Un-returned	37	10.48%

According to the results presented in Table 1, the response rate is 89.52%. Kothari (2004) indicates that 50% and above of response rate is enough for a descriptive study. Moreover, Babbie (2004) noted that return rates of above 50% are adequate to analyze and publish, 60% is good and 70% is very good and 80% is excellent. Based on these assertions from renowned scholars, the response rate of 89.52% is considered good and thus satisfactory for making inferences.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Leadership

The descriptive statistics for strategic leadership is presented below. The description of each of the measures of strategic leadership is presented below.

4.2.1.1 Descriptive Statistics for Idealized influence

The descriptive statistics of idealized influence is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Idealized influence

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
Health Care Leaders in the county are admirable	3.78	0.97	0.26
Health care Leaders in the county are highly respected	3.71	1.04	0.28
Health care Leaders in the county are highly trusted	3.82	1.19	0.31
Health care Leaders in the county are role model to many	3.57	1.21	0.34
Average	3.72	1.10	0.30

The average mean score of the survey questions regarding idealized influence was 3.72 with a standard deviation of 1.10 and 0.30 coefficient of variation as shown in Table 2. The coefficient of variation measures the dispersion of data points around the mean. This implied that health manager’s leaders in the county are admirable, highly respected, highly trusted and are role models to many. As stated by Korir and Bengat (2015), strategic leadership is the managerial capability of an organization to expect, predict, keep, and lead others to generate strategic decisions that provide a feasible future for the organization. A strategic leader must maximize the organization’s internal resources to actualize set goals (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 2017).

4.2.1.2 Descriptive Statistics for Vision Development

The descriptive statistics for vision development is depicted in Table 3

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Vision Development

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
The health care leaders in the county are vision oriented	3.65	1.07	0.29
There high incorporating of county core values	3.66	1.12	0.31
Leaders develop realistic vision	3.45	1.16	0.33
Leaders develop inspiring vision	3.58	1.22	0.34
Average	3.59	1.14	0.32

The study results presented in Table 3 show that the average mean score of the statements of vision development was 3.59 with a standard deviation of 1.14 and 0.32 coefficient of variation. This implied that the majority of the health managers agreed that health care leaders in the county are vision-oriented, there is a high incorporating of county core values, and leaders develop a realistic vision and inspiring vision. The results concur with Mangusho, Murei and Nelima (2015), who indicated that leaders must have the capability to focus on the organization’s management activities. Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) noted that vision development is used by strategic leaders to influence followers in making decisions voluntarily that determine the future long-term success of an organization. It is

worth noting that Strategic leadership motivates and persuades staff to share that same vision. This is because the performance of any firm depends on its leaders (Arora, & Sharma, 2016). It is worth noting that organizations collapse if the leadership fails to convince its employees to follow its vision, deal with threats, make poor judgments to manage the business environment.

4.2.1.3 Descriptive Statistics for Inspirational Motivation

The descriptive statistics for inspirational motivation is depicted in Table 4

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Inspirational Motivation

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
County articulates appealing vision that inspires to perform beyond expectation	3.49	1.21	0.35
The vision of the county is clear to be easily articulated by the employees	3.26	1.05	0.32
There is rewarding of the hardworking employees	1.97	1.01	0.51
There is building of consensus by allowing all views	2.71	1.09	0.40
Average	2.86	1.09	0.40

The results presented in Table 4 shows that the average mean score of the survey question relating to inspirational motivation was 2.86 with a standard deviation of 1.09 and a coefficient of variation of 0.40. This implied that the majority of health managers disagreed with the survey questions concerning inspirational motivation. The results concur with the findings of Marangu, Odindo and Egessa, (2015), who noted that motivation in most public institutions is unsatisfactory. Likewise, Chandra (2016) indicated that the employees' motivations are what determines the performance and employees' commitment. In addition, Hanaysha (2016) noted that employee empowerment and teamwork determine employee productivity.

4.2.1.4 Descriptive Statistics for contingent reward

The descriptive statistics for contingent reward is depicted in Table 5

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Contingent Reward

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
Leaders give rewards when the set goals are accomplished on-time	2.13	0.93	0.44
Leaders clarify the role and task requirements for subordinates	3.65	1.19	0.33
Reward allocation yield to significant effects on changes in intrinsic motivation and creativity of the employees	3.34	1.24	0.37
Leaders clarify remunerations upon accomplishing desired goals	2.44	1.01	0.41
Average	2.89	1.09	0.39

It is shown from the results in Table 5 that the average mean score of the survey questions concerning contingent reward was 2.89 with a standard deviation of 1.09 and coefficient of variation. This signifies that the majority of the respondents disagreed leaders give rewards when the set goals are accomplished on time and leaders clarify remunerations upon achieving desired goals. The majority of the health managers agreed that leaders clarify the role and task requirements for subordinates. Ogechi (2016) confirmed that strategic leadership has significant effect on performance. However, a study on performance management and employees' perceptions among small and medium business enterprises by Asamany & Shaorong (2018) found that apart from strategic leadership, many other factors have a significant role in improving the performance and motivation of employees.

4.2.2 Descriptive Statistics for Employee Retention

The descriptive statistics is presented based on the indicators of employee retention. The measure of employee retention includes employee empowerment, employee recognition, remuneration and training and development.

4.2.2.1 Descriptive Statistics for Employee Empowerment

The descriptive statistics for employee empowerment is presented in Table 6

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Empowerment

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
Employees are acknowledged for good performance	2.57	1.14	0.44
Employee retention is largely due to rewards	2.30	0.87	0.38
County Leadership has a system to recognize staff who perform well	2.12	0.98	0.46
Employees who have stayed longer than 3 years in the county tend to have better performance	2.91	1.26	0.43
Average	2.48	1.06	0.43

The average mean score of the survey questions relating to employee empowerment was 2.48, with a standard deviation of 1.06 and a coefficient of variation of 0.43. This signifies that the majority of the health care workers disagreed employees are acknowledged for good performance, employee retention is largely due to rewards, county leadership has a system to recognize staff who perform well and employees who have stayed longer than 3 years in the county tend to have better performance. Employee retention is the ability of an organizations to keep its employees even when there is an availability of external opportunities (Eckert, 2013). Employers use several strategies to enhance employee retention, including socialization, effectively communicating the organization's vision and mission to employees, being customer-centered, training and development, employee acknowledgment, rewards and compensation, and leadership (Yahaya, 2016).

4.2.2.2 Descriptive Statistics for Employee Recognition

The descriptive statistics for employee recognition is presented in Table 7

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Recognition

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
Employees rarely leave the county for better opportunities	2.58	1.13	0.44
Employees are satisfied with the work environment in the County	2.26	1.05	0.46
The County leadership recognizes the employees' work performance	2.54	1.13	0.44
There are adequate equal opportunities for staff to grow in the County	2.22	1.10	0.50
Average	2.40	1.10	0.46

The results presented in Table 7 show that the average mean score of the survey question of employee recognition was 2.40 with a standard deviation of 1.10 and 0.46 coefficient of variation. The results imply that most of the healthcare workers disagreed that Employees rarely leave the county for better opportunities, employees are satisfied with the work environment in the county, the county leadership recognizes the employees' work performance and there are adequate equal opportunities for staff grow in the county. To enhance productivity and reduce recruitment costs, organizations must have effective employee retention strategies that ensure the best retain employees, mainly in the health sector, where staff shortage is rampant. Employee retention has enhanced recruitment savings and a direct relationship with superior work performance (Ombija, 2018). Organizational leadership plays a significant role in employee retention (Jang & Kandampully, 2018).

4.2.2.3 Descriptive Statistics for Employee Remuneration

The descriptive statistics for employee remuneration is presented in Table 8

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Remuneration

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
The staff feels that there is no bias in allocation of rewards	2.24	1.00	0.45
The remuneration given to employees enhances their motivation	3.73	1.21	0.32
The nature of remuneration is commensurate to the work done	2.76	1.30	0.47
Average	2.91	1.17	0.40

The study results presented in Table 8 show that the average mean score of the survey questions informing employee remuneration was 2.24 with a mean score of 1 and 0.45 coefficient of variation. The results signify that majority of the health care workers

disagreed that staff feels that there is no bias in the allocation of rewards and the nature of remuneration is commensurate to the work done. Snell, Bohlander and Morris (2015) claim that an organization with effective leadership that strategically manages human resources will have higher levels of employee retention. Moreover, Aguenza and Mat Som's (2018) survey on motivational factors of employee retention and engagement in organizations confirms that employee retention arises from motivation which further enhances performance.

4.2.2.4 Descriptive Statistics for Training and Development

The descriptive statistics for training and development is presented in Table 9

Table 9: Descriptive statistics for Training and Development

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
The organization provides relevant support to employees to improve performance	3.57	1.35	0.38
Employees consider their performance targets as being appropriate	3.83	1.03	0.27
The Employees are well trained for the jobs they perform	3.78	1.04	0.27
The organization adequately utilizes employee competencies	3.67	1.13	0.31
The Employees are given adequate support for professional development	3.51	1.18	0.34
Average	3.67	1.14	0.31

The study findings presented in Table 9 show that the average mean score of the survey questions relating to training and development was 3.56 with a standard deviation of 1.14 and 0.31 coefficient of variation. Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) noted that training and career development are core for the employees and leaders to achieve the common objective of an organization. According to Kariuki (2014), shortage of critical staff is caused by high rates of turnover by medical personnel resulting from low morale and inadequate capacity building.

4.2.3 Descriptive Statistics for Performance of Healthcare workers

The dependent variable in the study is the performance of health care workers. The measures of performance included target achievement, employee satisfaction, efficiency and patient satisfaction. The descriptive statistics for measures of performance of health care workers is presented in subsections below.

4.2.3.1 Descriptive Statistics for Target achievement

The descriptive statistics for target achievement is summarized in Table 10

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics for Target Achievement

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
I have a clear understanding of the performance standards expected of me on my job	4.25	0.80	0.19
I priorities tasks so that I do the most important and urgent first	4.38	0.54	0.12
I am are held accountable for achieving goals and meeting expectations	4.15	0.66	0.16
I am encouraged by my manager to come up with better ways of doing things	3.76	1.20	0.32
Average	4.14	0.80	0.20

The descriptive statistics for target achievement presented in Table 10 indicate that the average mean score of the survey questions regarding target achievement is 4.14 with a standard deviation of 0.80 and 0.20 coefficient of variation. The results imply that majority of the health workers agreed with the statements provided. A study conducted by Ali and Ahmed (2009) showed that performance is claimed to be one factor that accounts for effectiveness and efficiency in the organization and makes them competitive at the market level.

4.2.3.2 Descriptive Statistics for Employee satisfaction

The descriptive statistics for employee satisfaction is presented in Table 11

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Satisfaction

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
I can accomplish all the assigned tasks within the set deadlines	4.11	0.59	0.14
My supervisors are satisfied with my work output.	4.09	0.73	0.18
There is formal appraisal to rate my performance	3.28	1.06	0.32
I have been recognized severally for good performance as per organizational policy.	3.14	1.22	0.39
Average	3.66	0.90	0.26

According to the results of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 11, it can be noted that the average mean score is 3.66 with a standard deviation of 0.90 and 0.26 coefficient of variation. The results show that majority of the respondents agreed they can accomplish all the assigned tasks within the set deadlines and their supervisors are satisfied with their work output. However, it was found that some of the health care workers were neutral on the matters that there is a formal appraisal to rate their performance and they have been recognized severally for good performance as per organizational policy.

4.2.3.3 Descriptive Statistics for Efficiency

The descriptive statistics for efficiency is presented in Table 12

Table 12: Descriptive Statistics for Efficiency

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
Employees can deliver under less than perfect conditions	3.59	0.92	0.26
Average	3.59	0.92	0.26

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 12 indicate that majority of the health care workers agreed that employees could deliver under less than perfect conditions, as supported by the mean score of 3.59 with a standard deviation of 0.92 and 0.26 coefficient of variation. Healthcare workers' performance is affected by external and internal forces that influence performance, including competition, technology and working, motivation levels, skills, and knowledge (Acha, Hargiss & Howard, 2013).

4.2.3.4 Descriptive Statistics for Patient satisfaction

The descriptive statistics for patient satisfaction is presented in Table 13

Table 13: Descriptive Statistics for Patient Satisfaction

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
Concerns on service raised by patients usually solved timely	3.38	1.10	0.33
County health department has client feedback mechanism in place	2.79	1.16	0.42
Average	3.09	1.13	0.37

The results presented in Table 13 indicate that the mean score of the survey questions regarding patient satisfaction was 3.09 with a standard deviation of 1.13 and 0.37 coefficient of variation. This implies that the views of health care concerning whether concerns on service raised by patients are usually solved timely and county health department has client feedback mechanism in place has been mixed. The health care who agreed with the statements and those who disagreed were almost the same and thus, we can conclude the health workers remained neutral on the developed questions regarding patient satisfaction. Therefore, there is no guarantee the concerns on service raised by patients are usually solved timely and County health departments have a client feedback mechanism in place.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The correlation results are presented in Table 14

Table 14: Correlation Analysis

Variable		Performance of Health care workers	Strategic Leadership	Employee Retention
Performance of Health care workers	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000		
Strategic Leadership	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.698**	1.000	
Employee Retention	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.586**	.604**	1.000
		0.000	0.000	

The correlation results depicted in Table 14 establish a positive and significant relationship between strategic leadership and the performance of health care workers ($r=.698, p=.000$). Also, a positive and significant association exists between employee retention and the performance of health care workers ($r=.586, p=.000$). The study by Marangu, Odindo and Egessa, (2015) noted that leadership style has a strong positive and significant effect on the performance of Health Service Provision in Kenya.

4.4 Hypotheses Testing

The hypothesis to be tested was;

H₀: There is no significant intervening effect of employee retention on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of health care workers in North Eastern Counties of Kenya.

The intervening effect of employee retention was analyzed in 4 steps. The multivariate model in the four steps are as shown below;

- i. $HP=B_0+B_1SL+\varepsilon$
- ii. $ER=\beta_0+\beta_1SL+\varepsilon$
- iii. $HP=B_0+B_1ER+\varepsilon$
- iv. $HP=B_0+B_1SL+B_1ER+\varepsilon$

Where;

HP =Health worker Performance

SL=Strategic Leadership

ER= Employee retention

The coefficient of determination (R squared) for the four steps is presented in Table 15

Table 15: R Squared for Strategic Leadership, Employee retention and Performance

Model	R Square
1	0.487
2	0.365
3	0.343
4	0.529

The results in Table 15 show the R-square for the mediating effect had varying values. The R-Square for the first step of strategic leadership against performance is 48.7%, while the second step of regressing strategic leadership against employee retention is 36.5%. The third step in which the employee retention is regressed against performance had an R-square of 34.3%. Lastly, the R square found when strategic leadership and employee retention are regressed against performance is 52.9%.

Moreover, the results of the analysis of variance in the four steps is summarized in Table 16

Table 16: ANOVA for Strategic Leadership, Employee retention and Performance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.161	1	19.161	297.603	.000
	Residual	20.216	314	0.064		
	Total	39.377	315			
2	Regression	12.337	1	12.337	180.376	.000
	Residual	21.476	314	0.068		
	Total	33.812	315			
3	Regression	13.517	1	13.517	164.125	.000
	Residual	25.86	314	0.082		
	Total	39.377	315			
4	Regression	20.839	2	10.42	175.927	.000
	Residual	18.538	313	0.059		
	Total	39.377	315			

The ANOVA results presented in Table 16 revealed that all the four models were significant, as the P-value in the four models was 0.000, which is less than 0.05. The results for the regression of coefficients for strategic leadership, employee retention and performance are presented in Table 17

Table 17: Regression Coefficients for Strategic Leadership, Employee retention and Performance

Steps		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.105	0.233		0.452	0.652
	Strategic leadership	0.993	0.058	0.698	17.251	0.000
2	(Constant)	0.860	0.240		3.585	0.000
	Strategic leadership	0.797	0.059	0.604	13.430	0.000
3	(Constant)	1.536	0.202		7.611	0.000
	Employee Retention	0.632	0.049	0.586	12.811	0.000
4	(Constant)	-0.135	0.228		-0.594	0.553
	Strategic leadership	0.770	0.069	0.541	11.119	0.000
	Employee Retention	0.280	0.053	0.259	5.323	0.000

The fitted models becomes;

- i. $HP=0.105+0.993SL$
- ii. $ER=0.860+0.797SL$
- iii. $HP=1.536+0.632ER$
- iv. $HP=-0.135+0.770SL+0.280ER$

The regression of coefficients results presented in Table 17 indicates that in phase one, the regression model of strategic leadership on health worker performance is positively and significantly related ($\beta=0.993$, $p=0.000$). In phase two, strategic leadership and employee retention is positively and significantly related ($\beta=.797$, $p=0.000$). In phase three, the results indicate that the regression model of the employee retention on health worker performance is positively and significantly related with ($\beta=.632$, $p=0.000$). In phase four, strategic leadership and employee retention on health worker performance is positively and significantly related with $\beta=.770$, $p=0.000$; $\beta=.280$, $p=0.000$ respectively. The results were supported by their calculated t statistics of 11.119 and 5.323, respectively.

The P values in all the phases: 1 to 4 were less than 0.05. Particularly, the decision was made based on phase 4. Under phase four, the P-value was found to be less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is a significant (partial) intervening effect of employee retention on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of health care workers. The results concur with Aguenza and Mat Som (2018), who reported that employee retention arises from motivation, further enhancing performance. A study on determining factors of employee retention by Kossivi and Kalgora (2016) did not get any strong relationship between retention and work performance.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concluded there is a positive and significant relationship between employee retention and the performance of health care workers. Employee retention can be influenced by employee empowerment, recognition, and remuneration. The regression model of strategic leadership on health worker performance is positively and significantly related. The results also showed the regression model of strategic leadership on employee retention is positively and significantly related. Effective retention strategies require the organization leadership to continuously diagnose the nature and causes of turnover and develop remedies. It is understood that when employees optimize their skills, talents, and competencies in performing their duties, efficiency and performance increase.

6.0 Recommendations

The study strongly recommended encouraging the health workers to remain in North Eastern regions despite the circumstances. There is the need of the county governments and other health care stakeholders to emphasize empowerment, recognition, remuneration and training and development of the health care workers. The county leadership needs to have a system to recognize staff who perform well and the working environment needs to be conducive. The opportunities within the County need to be equal despite the race, tribe, or ethnicity. The employees to be given adequate support for professional development. There is the need to have a human resource advisory council to protect health workers' welfare and the human resource advisory council to research and advise on strategies to be implemented.

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