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HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AS DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE UGANDA PUBLIC SERVICE

Nuwagira Adoniya¹, Emuron Lydia², Tukundane Benson³

Kampala International University^{1,2,3}

nuwagiramhrm@yahoo.com¹, emuronlydia@kiu.ac.ug², bensontukundanestud.kiu.ac.ug³

Abstract:

This study investigated how the Human resource management practices of an organization impact the commitment and engagement among employees using the Uganda Public Service setting. A cross-sectional survey was conducted using a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative data collected through a questionnaire and qualitative data gathered through interviews and focus group discussions. The sample size of 358 employees was drawn from a target population of 3,429 civil servants deployed in six ministries by the Ministry of Public Service. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire was coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The findings show that Human Resource Management practices significantly impact organizational commitment ($F=34.139$, $sig.=0.000$) and work engagement ($F=34.262$, $sig.=0.000$). Monetary compensation was found to play a dominant role in motivating employees in the Ugandan public service, contrary to theoretical perspectives suggesting that money is not the main motivator for performance. To improve employee commitment and engagement, the study recommended that the government of Uganda; should prioritise fair and competitive compensation for all employees, addressing issues of perceived unfairness such as salary discrepancies. Providing adequate remuneration in the form of allowances and facilitation can foster a sense of value and appreciation among employees. The government of Uganda should also prioritize professional growth opportunities within the Public Service to foster an environment that attracts and retains committed employees, ultimately boosting productivity and effectiveness.

Keywords: Human resource management practices, commitment and work engagement

1. Introduction

The evolution of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices traces a fascinating historical journey, preceding other management functions and finding its roots in ancient civilizations (Dulebohn et al., 1995; Deadrick and Stone, 2014). Human resource management and its practices though relatively a new term, that emerged in the late 1970s, have its roots in ancient times. For example, minimum wage and incentive wage plans were in Babylonian codes or the Code of Hammurabi around 1800 B.C. (Thakur, 2020). During the period 2000BC to 1500BC, the Chinese had started using the principle of division of labour and employee screening techniques, while the

Greeks in Europe were applying an apprentice system, to get the best performance from the people they were employing (Tubey et al., 2015).

The phased evolution of HRM practices in developed countries influenced similar trends in African countries and Uganda in particular (Nicol, 1979). Nicol observed that the development of HRM practices in many African countries followed patterns similar to those of their former colonial masters. However, the comprehensive establishment and implementation of HRM practices lagged behind the strides made by European counterparts during the industrialization era. Despite continuous efforts by local and international organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the level of achievement in HRM practices in developing nations remains relatively low, possibly contributing to suboptimal employee performance (Arshad, 2014). One of the priorities of the Uganda public service is cultivating a highly engaged and committed workforce to fulfil government objectives. Tabouli et al. (2016) asserted that effective implementation of HRM practices can attract committed employees, providing a competitive advantage.

However, the Auditor General's Report (2019) revealed shortcomings in the Uganda Public Service, indicating a lack of employee engagement and commitment through delays in work plan approvals, project timeline extensions leading to increased costs, and compromised service delivery, as noted by Lutwama (2011). Musingwire (2019) emphasized that many government Ministries, Departments, and Local Government units in Uganda underperformed due to senior managers undervaluing staff commitment and engagement. This undervaluation was linked to the failure to establish effective reward systems, performance plans, and timely performance appraisals (Musingwire 2019). Consequently, there is a pressing need to understand the impact of HRM practices on organizational variables like performance, commitment, and engagement. Several studies, which include Aboramadan et al. (2020) in Palestine and Saad et al. (2021) in Egypt, have investigated the impact of HRM practices on organizational commitment and work engagement. However, these studies were conducted in geographically distant countries from Uganda, and none specifically focused on the Public Service of those nations. Consequently, there existed a crucial gap that necessitated further exploration to thoroughly assess how HRM practices affect organizational commitment and work engagement within the Uganda Public Service. These studies are crucial for deriving practical insights capable of instigating meaningful changes, improvements, and strategic initiatives in Uganda. This study set out to establish the effect of HRM practices on organizational commitment and to investigate the impact of HRM practices on work engagement in the Uganda Public Service.

2. Literature Review

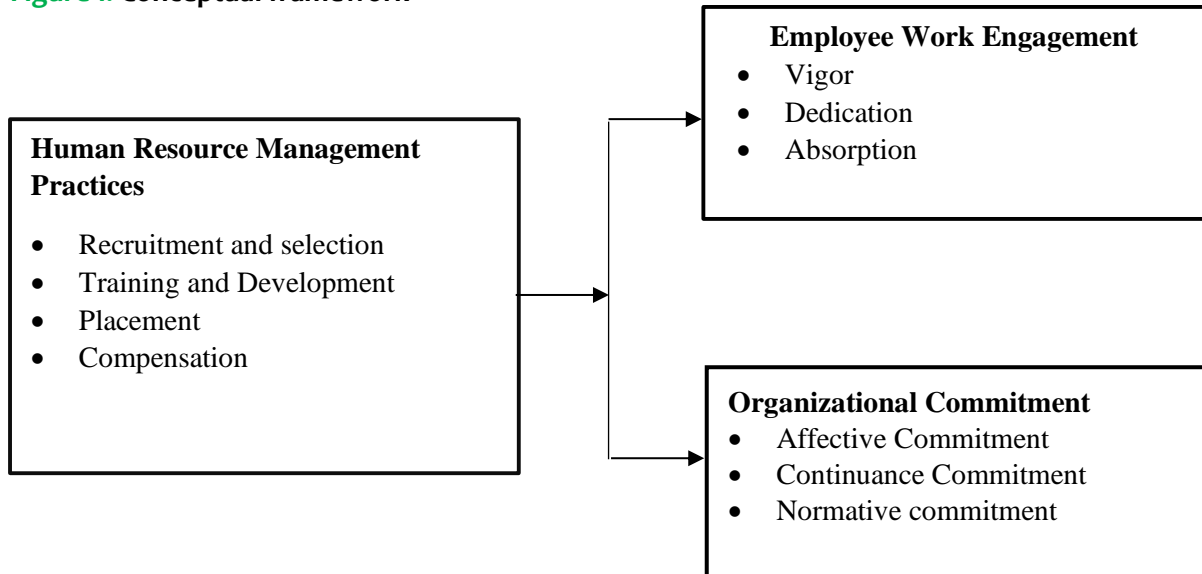
2.1 Conceptual Review

Human Resource Management Practices

It was observed that there is a lack of consensus among scholars and management practitioners on a universal definition for Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, as provided by scholars such as Armstrong (2009), Akhtar et al. (2016), Otoo & Mishra (2018), Tan & Nasuridin (2011), and Wangui & Makhamara (2021). In this study, HRM practices are defined as formal policies, approaches, and philosophies aimed at addressing human resource gaps while facilitating the processes of staffing, motivation, compensation, retention, and governance to align with an

organization's objectives. Due to HRM practices being many, focusing on all of them within one study has not been attempted and this study will not be an exception. Therefore, this research specifically studied four practices: recruitment and selection, training and development, placement, and compensation.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Employee Work Engagement

Scholars define the term employee work engagement differently and there is no generally acceptable definition. For example, Dajani (2015); Aktar and Pangil (2018), define employee work engagement as the extent to which an employee is physically involved in the work, cognitively attentive and emotionally connected towards one's work. Work engagement was also defined by Bakker and Demerouti, (2008) as a state of mind of a person which includes dedication, vigour and absorption in one's work.

According to Shuck *et al.* (2011), employee engagement is about an individual employee's cognitive, emotional and behavioural state of mind being directed towards achieving, the desired organizational outcomes. These authors asserted that engaged workers move the extra mile while doing their job, they tend to be innovative, highly productive, have high levels of energy, experience positive emotions and are enthusiastic about their job. Therefore, more engaged employees lead to organizational success. Several other scholars including Schaufeli & Bakker, 2006; Tripathi & Sharma, 2016) among others, also defined work engagement differently without consensus on one definition. To avoid confusion created by different definitions by different scholars, this study adopted the definition of employee work engagement which was given by Kim *et al.* (2019), who defined employee work engagement as a positive fulfilling, work-related state of mind which is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption.

Organisational Commitment

Organizational commitment was also defined variously by different scholars. For example, it was defined by Tolentino (2013) as a means that motivates employees to develop a sense of accepting organizational goals and putting extra effort towards those goals. Qaisar *et al.* (2012) defined organizational commitment as a psychological means that motivates and encourages employees

to work hard for their organization by adopting the values of the organization that lead to effective organisational productivity. Greenberg and Baron (2008), cited in Herrera and De Las Heras-Rosas (2021), defined organizational commitment as the degree to which employees identify themselves with an organization where they work, the degree of commitment they show and whether they are willing to leave it or not.

The most accepted constructs of organizational commitment were provided by Allen and Meyer (1990), which include; affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Bar-Haim, 2019; Tabouli *et al.*, 2016). Affective commitment is concerned with employee involvement, identification and attachment to the organization. Normative commitment relates to an employee's feelings towards the organization with the view of remaining and working for it. On the other hand, continuance commitment is concerned with employees' feelings about staying or leaving the organization (Suksod & Cruthaka, 2020).

This study defined organisational commitment to mean, the degree of psychological commitment which motivates and encourages employees to identify themselves with the organization where they work, and also encourages them to work hard by adopting the values of the organization that lead to effective organisational productivity. At the same time, this study measured organizational commitment by looking at the three constructs of; affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment as opined by Allen and Meyer, (1990).

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Human resource management (HRM) practices and employees' work engagement

Several research studies have been done to explain the problem of employee disengagement and what explains it. Many researchers have indicated that disengaged employees pose significant productivity and economic challenges in various countries. For example, in the United States, the annual cost of employee disengagement is estimated to be between \$250 and \$300 billion. Germany faces a similar challenge, with an estimated annual cost of \$263 billion, Australia grapples with an annual cost of \$4.9 billion, while the Asian economy is also affected, with an estimated annual cost of around \$2.5 billion (Shuck *et al.*, 2011).

The problem of employee disengagement has been attributed to many factors within and outside organisations. Most researchers have attributed it to internal factors within an organisation and most of these internal factors relate to HRM practices. For example, Bhawna and Vinod (2018), established that HRM practices significantly impact employee engagement. This is also supported by Alzyoud (2018), who established in Bahrain that HRM practices influence employee work engagement. Nasurdin and Choo (2014), also established a positive significant relationship between HRM practices and work engagement. These findings are also in agreement with those of Saad *et al.*, (2021) in Egypt; Ngoc and Pham (2021) in Vietnam; Ahmed *et al.* (2020) in Pakistan; Urbini *et al.* (2021); Nalini and Khyser (2019) who reviewed secondary literature.

In explaining the relationship between HRM practices and employee work engagement, Osborne and Hammoud (2017) in the USA established that proper application of HRM practices resulted in ineffective employee engagement. In the Malaysian oil and gas industry, Memon *et al.*, (2020) indicated that some HRM practices (training and performance appraisal) were key drivers of employee engagement. Zhang *et al.* (2018) in China, also proved that perceived employee empowerment increased employees' work engagement. Similar results were also obtained by Van

Beurden *et al.* (2021) in the Netherlands. Other studies with similar results include Yustrilia *et al.* (2022) in Indonesia, Owor (2016) in soft drinks and sugar firms of Kampala Uganda; Fayad and Easa (2020); Aybas and Acar (2017) in Turkey; Imran *et al.* (2021) in Pakistan; Msangi *et al.* (2020) in Tanzanian, and Kavyashree *et al.* (2022) in India among others.

Previous studies conducted in various countries like the USA, Malaysia, China, Netherlands, Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Tanzania, and India consistently indicate that effective HRM practices significantly impact work engagement. However, applying these findings directly to Uganda might not be suitable due to differing operational environmental settings. Notably, the sole study within Uganda was confined to private soft drinks and sugar companies, which operate distinctly from the Uganda Public Service. While these reviewed studies provide foundational evidence, they primarily focus on employees in the private sector, leaving an empirical gap in understanding the context within the Uganda public sector. This study aims to address this gap by hypothesizing that HRM practices are not significant determinants of employee work engagement within the Uganda Public Service.

2.2.2 Human resource management practices and employees' Organisational Commitment

Numerous studies have shown a strong positive relationship between Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and employees' organizational commitment. These studies were conducted in various countries such as Somalia (Warsame, 2015), Australia (Chew & Chan, 2008), India (Khatri & Gupta, 2015), Jordan (Khaled *et al.*, 2015), Palestinian universities (Aboramadan *et al.*, 2020), Thailand's pharmacy sector (Sittisom, 2020), Egypt (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2017), Pakistan (Suifan, 2015; Imran & Ahmed, 2012; Sial *et al.*, 2011), China's banking sector (Ghazanfar *et al.*, 2012), and Ghana (Amponsah & Mensah, 2016) all indicated a positive correlation between HRM practices and employees' organizational commitment. However, these diverse studies in their locations and contexts, presented findings unsuitable for directly addressing issues within the Uganda Public Service. For example, none of the reviewed studies focused on a country's public service, and all were conducted outside Uganda, leaving a gap in understanding the specific situation of Uganda.

The absence of empirical research within Uganda's public sector necessitated this study, aiming to bridge this knowledge gap and provide insights pertinent to Uganda, and more specifically, its Public Service. The wealth of literature reviewed underscored the robust association between HRM practices and organizational commitment, but the absence of studies within the Uganda Public Service poses a challenge in applying these findings directly. This study strives to offer a localized understanding that caters to the unique dynamics of the Uganda Public Service, thereby enhancing the relevance and applicability of these findings within the country's specific context.

3. Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design with a sample size of 358 drawn from a target population of 3429 civil servants employed by Public Service in six Ministries, which include; Local Government, Public Service, Education and Sports, Works and Transport, Presidency, and Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities.

The sample size for the study was determined using Slovene's formula, which is expressed as:

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

In this formula, n = the required sample size, N = target population, and e = significance level set at 0.05. In this specific study, the target population (N) = 3429. Substituting these values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{3429}{1 + 3429(0.05 \times 0.05)} = 358$$

This calculation resulted in a required sample size of 358 civil servants. The selection of respondents was conducted through purposive sampling for top management officials in Ministries, while simple random sampling was employed to choose middle managers and other members of staff in lower cadre categories. A mixed methods approach was utilized in this study, comprising both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The quantitative data was collected through the use of a validated questionnaire, while qualitative data was obtained through interviews and focused group discussions. The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. The analysis involved the calculation of means and standard deviations, as well as the application of multiple linear regression techniques to test the hypotheses.

On the other hand, the collected qualitative data played a pivotal role in providing a deep and rich understanding of the subject matter. Through interviews and focused group discussions, individuals' personal stories, thoughts, and emotions concerning the issues being studied were captured. These narratives held significant relevance in shedding more light and explaining the core problems of issues under the study. The qualitative data served as a crucial safeguard, ensuring that no critical aspects were inadvertently overlooked in the research. Essentially, qualitative data complemented the quantitative data by offering profound insights into the subjects under investigation, thereby enriching the overall understanding of the subjects under investigation.

4. Findings

4.1 Effects of Human resource management practices on employees' engagement in the Uganda Public Service

The first objective aimed at finding out whether Human resource management (HRM) practices significantly affect employee work engagement in the Uganda Public Service. Four constructs were used in measuring HRM practices, with 29 question items based on a Five-point Likert scale with these ratings; 1=Strongly disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Undecided (U), 4 = Agree (A) and 5= Strongly agree (SA). Descriptive showing means and standard deviations were used to analyse the responses and results are presented in Table 2. To interpret the means in Table 2, the following scale was used as a guide;

Mean range	Response range	Interpretation
4.21 - 5.00	Strongly agree	Very effective
3.41 - 4.20	Agree	Effective
2.61 - 3.40	Undecided	Fairly effective
1.81 - 2.60	Disagree	Ineffective
1.00 - 1.80	Strongly disagree	Very ineffective

Testing hypothesis One

For objective one, the null hypothesis which stated that Human resource management (HRM) practices are not a significant determinant of work engagement in the Uganda Public service, was tested. This null hypothesis was tested by running a multiple linear regression model with HRM practices as the predictors and work engagement as the predicted. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1: Multiple Linear Regression Results for Human resource management practices on employee work engagement

Variables Regressed	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.	Interpretation	Decision on Ho
HRMPs Vs. Engagement	.294	34.262	.000	Significant effect	Rejected
Coefficients	Beta	T			
(Constant)	2.224	14.605	.000	Significant effect	Rejected
Employee Selection	.071	1.045	.297	Insignificant effect	Accepted
Training and Development	.301	4.421	.000	Significant effect	Rejected
Placement	-.034	-.469	.639	Insignificant effect	Accepted
Compensation & Rewards	.287	4.296	.000	Significant effect	Rejected

Source: Researcher's computation (2021)

The results in Table 1 indicate that Human Resource Management practices are a significant determinant of work engagement ($F=34.262$, $sig. = 0.000$). The model predictors which are the Human resource management practices taken together, account for only 29.4% towards variations in work engagement (adjusted $R^2=.294$). The modal coefficients reveal that, of all the four Human resource management practices examined in this study, only two are important, that is to say, significant predictors of employee engagement. These are training and development (Beta = 0.301; $sig. = 0.000$) and then compensation and rewards (Beta = 0.287; $sig. = 0.000$). The results show clearly that compensation, and training and development as HRM practices are significant predictors of employee engagement.

Table 2: Mean Rating on human resource management practices by employees in the Uganda Public Service (n = 321)

HRM Practices Constructs	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Recruitment and selection	3.45	1.113	Effective
Training and Development	3.78	.681	Effective
Placement	3.57	.814	Effective
Compensation and Rewards	2.82	.919	Fairly effective
Overall mean for HRM practices	3.40	.697	Fairly effective

Source: Researcher's computation (2021)

Results in Table 2 revealed that HRM practices were rated to be effective on three out of the four constructs. Overall, all HRM practices in this study were rated to be generally fairly effective (Overall mean = 3.40; SD=0.697), suggesting that respondents were fairly satisfied that the HRM practices in the sampled ministries were fairly implemented. Qualitative results slightly deviated from quantitative findings. This is because, while the findings from quantitative data as presented in Table 2 showed that respondents perceived the implementation of HRM practices as being generally fair, six out of eight interviewed participants were of the view that they are well implemented. The face-to-face discussions revealed several opinions leading to this conclusion. For example, the fourth participant (P4) said that;

“... in general terms, there is improvement in the public service when handling Human resource management practices of recruitment and selection, training and development. However, the issue of compensation remained the main problem affecting performance”.

This participant further indicated that the remuneration for scientists has been enhanced which has boosted their morale to work. However, he revealed that there is still big work to be done for other employees who are not scientists. He recommended that pay for all employees of government should be enhanced to match inflation, something that the government has not done for the last seven years, yet inflation has been on the rise year after year. This means that people’s real salaries have been decreasing due to inflation.

The views of the fourth participant (P4) are in agreement with those of participant seven (P7) on the implementation of HRM practices. When asked to comment on how well or poorly HRM practices were being implemented in her line ministry, she pointed out that;

“recruitment and selection procedures were being well implemented. The District Service Commission is doing a good job while for central government staff, the Public Service Commission is recruiting and selecting the right people with the right qualifications. The best candidates are then offered the jobs and then they are subjected to orientation and induction during the probation period”.

The study also tried to find out if the level of employee work engagement was high or low. Staff engagement was measured with three constructs of absorption, dedication and vigour and 17 five-point Likert-scaled questions, whose descriptive statistics are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations on how employees rated their level of work engagement in the Uganda Public Service (n = 321)

Engagement Constructs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Vigour	3.72	.677	High
Dedication	3.90	.658	High
Absorption	3.55	.679	High
Overall mean for work engagement	3.72	.559	High

Source: Researcher’s computation (2021)

Results in Table 3 reveal that work engagement was rated high on all three constructs used to measure it, dedication rated highest (average mean = 3.90; SD =0.658), indicating that the responses did not differ much from the mean. Overall, engagement was rated high, with a mean

of 3.72 (SD=0.559), suggesting that respondents are generally satisfied with the extent to which they are engaged in activities of their respective ministries. While quantitative findings supported the belief that the effectiveness of HRM practices, can significantly increase employee engagement, the views obtained from face-to-face interviews qualitatively, presented mixed findings. Some participants attributed the low or high engagement among employees to factors related to HRM practices while others attributed it to other factors other than HRM practices. One interviewee (P1) brought out some beliefs from theory, saying that;

P1: *“Some studies show that compensation drives behaviour, so where there is little compensation people will not be seriously committed to the organisation but they will continue working for purposes of remaining on payroll without bothering whether they are doing the right things in time.*

This participant observed that the approach of how HRM Practices like *“placement, separation, compensation and reward systems are handled influence employee behaviour and their performance”*. This is in agreement with the views of other participants P4 and P3, who attributed the low commitment and engagement levels among young employees to low pay. Below are some of their views;

P4; *“...engagement of staff especially the lower cadres is being eroded by challenges of low salary to these cadres.... to improve their performance, there is a need to make some mitigation measures on their pay...the government needs to provide them with lunch allowances, mileage allowances, medical allowances as means to compensate for their low pay”*.

This study demonstrated a significant relationship between HRM practices and work engagement in the Uganda Public Service. Quantitative results showed that training and development, as well as compensation and rewards, are key predictors of employee work engagement. While HRM practices are generally perceived as fairly effective, qualitative insights suggested that compensation remained a major concern affecting employees' work engagement.

4.2 Effects of Human resource management practices on organisational commitment in the Uganda Public Service

The second objective aimed at finding out whether Human resource management (HRM) practices significantly affect organisational commitment in the Uganda Public Service. Three constructs namely affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment were used in measuring organisational commitment, with 18 question items based on a Five-point Likert scale with these ratings; 1=Strongly disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Undecided (U), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly agree (SA). Means and standard deviations were used to analyse the responses and results are presented in Table 5. The interpretation of these results is facilitated by the following guide;

Mean range	Response range	Interpretation
4.21-5.00	Strongly agree	Very high
3.41-4.20	Agree	High
2.61-3.40	Undecided	Moderate
1.81-2.60	Disagree	Low
1.00-1.80	Strongly disagree	Very low

Testing hypothesis two

The researcher tested a null hypothesis stating that HRM practices are not a significant determinant of organizational commitment in the Uganda Public Service. This null hypothesis was tested by running a multiple linear regression model, where, organisational commitment was the predicted variable and HRM practices as the predictor variables. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4: Multiple Linear Regression Results for the effects of Human resource management practices on organisational commitment

Variables Regressed	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.	Interpretation	Decision on Ho
HRMPs Vs. OC	.294	34.139	.000	Significant effect	Rejected
Coefficients	Beta	T			
(Constant)	1.779	9.770	.000	Significant effect	Rejected
Employee Selection	-.092	-1.365	.173	Insignificant effect	Accepted
Training & Development	.068	1.005	.316	Insignificant effect	Accepted
Placement	.215	2.974	.003	Significant effect	Rejected
Compensation & Rewards	.397	5.931	.000	Significant effect	Rejected

Source: Researcher's computation (2021)

The results in Table 4 indicate that Human resource management practices are a significant determinant of organisational commitment ($F=34.139$, $sig. = 0.000$). The model predictors which are the Human resource management practices taken together, account for only 29.4% towards variations in organisational commitment (adjusted $R^2=.294$). The modal coefficients reveal that, of all the four Human resource management practices examined in this study, only two are important, that is to say, significant predictors of employee commitment. These are placement (Beta = 0.215; $sig. = 0.003$) and compensation and rewards (Beta = 0.397; $sig. = 0.000$).

Table 5: Means and standard deviations on how employees rated their level of organisational commitment in the Uganda Public Service (n = 321)

Organizational commitment Constructs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Affective commitment	3.48	.884	High
Continuance commitment	3.10	.926	Moderate
Normative commitment	3.11	.667	Moderate
Overall mean for organizational commitment	3.23	.668	Moderate

Source: Researcher's computation from primary data (2021)

The findings in Table 5 indicate that employees rated their organisational commitment to be generally high on one construct (affective commitment) out of the three constructs used to measure this variable. The remaining two constructs (continuance and normative commitment) were rated to be moderate. Overall, the organisational commitment was rated to be moderate, with an average mean of 3.23, which falls under moderate on the interpretation guide, with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.668, which is relatively low, indicating that the responses did not differ much, so the mean is more representative of the true views of the respondents.

In line with the findings in Table 5, P1 said that; *“there is a high level of employee organisational commitment although there are some who are not...the non-committed employees exploit the loopholes of offices of some departments not being in one area. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries has offices in Kampala and Entebbe accommodating departments under one supervisor... the practice of scattering offices makes supervision difficult and in one way or another creates loopholes for non-committed staff to dodge work”*. The distance between Kampala and Entebbe is about 45.6 km.

On whether employees in the ministry have a high preference to stay or leave, this participant was of the view that; *“senior employees who are viewing pension after retirement have a low preference to leave unlike the younger cadres, whose preference to leave is higher than the senior ones... even the young cadres with higher preference to leave are not leaving because of high unemployment rate in Uganda”*. This implies that once better job opportunities show up, they can leave as they have little to lose compared to the senior cadres, who have some good money to go home with when they retire.

On the other hand, the participant (P3) commented on the issue of commitment, indicating that; *“some employees just occupy positions and when an opportunity arises, they can leave because some people continue to do their private work while in government offices. According to (P3) the Ministry provides minimal resources that cannot make some people to be fully occupied and utilise their full potential. He revealed that some employees still have a tendency to leave their jackets on chairs in their offices to deceive clients and supervisors that they are not far but when they are out of their offices doing their private work during office hours. This participant further indicated that there are sections within the public service who have to work without leaving offices because of their schedule of duties and type of work. He gave the example of people working in the Accounts and Human Resources departments because they have to prepare payrolls and different allowances for other employees. He stated that other employees with no strict duties can afford to be out of their offices for quite some time because their work comes when there are resources to facilitate them. In the absence of resources, the officers remain redundant even when they have the will to work.*

While quantitative findings support the belief that the effectiveness of Human Resource Management practices, can significantly increase employee commitment, the views obtained from face-to-face interviews qualitatively, present mixed findings. Some participants attributed the low or the high commitment among employees to factors related to Human Resource Management practices while others attributed it to other factors other than Human Resource Management practices. One interviewee (P1) brought out some beliefs from theory, saying that;

P1: *“Some studies show that compensation drives behaviour, so where there is little compensation people will not be seriously committed to the organisation but they will continue working for purposes of remaining on payroll without bothering whether they are doing the right things in time.*

This participant observed that the approach of how Human Resource Management Practices like *“placement, separation, compensation and reward systems are handled influence employee behaviour and their performance”*. This is in agreement with the views of other participants P4 and

P3, who attributed the low commitment levels among young employees to low pay. Below are some of their views;

P4;“...engagement and commitment of staff especially the lower cadres is being eroded by challenges of low salary to these cadres.... to improve their performance, there is a need to make some mitigation measures on their pay...the government needs to provide them with lunch allowances, mileage allowances, medical allowances as means to compensate for their low pay”.

P3; “...commitment of employees depends on the remuneration, facilitation and other allowances... an employee cannot be committed when he/she is not well facilitated...”

The study indicated a significance between HRM practices and organizational commitment among Uganda Public Service employees, with strong ratings in affective commitment and ratings in continuance and normative commitment. While quantitative data shows a significant link between HRM practices and commitment, qualitative insights reveal varied perspectives. Compensation stood out as a vital factor affecting organisational commitment among the Uganda Public Service employees, especially among lower cadres. It underscores the intricate interplay of factors influencing organizational commitment in the public sector.

In summary, the research results showed a significant correlation between HRM practices and work engagement within the Uganda Public Service. Notably, training and development, along with compensation, emerged as crucial factors influencing employee work engagement. Additionally, the study presented a significant association between HRM practices and organizational commitment. The qualitative analysis emphasized the importance of addressing compensation issues to improve both work engagement and organizational commitment of employees in the Uganda Public Service.

4.3 Discussion

The results from this study showed that the effective application of Human resource management (HRM) practices positively and significantly increases the levels of employees' commitment and work engagement in the Uganda Public Service. More so, if civil servants expect good compensation and rewards, they tend to be more engaged and committed to their work. In most cases, workers get more engaged in their work and committed to their organisation when they expect good rewards in return. It was observed that employee work engagement and organizational commitment are not merely intrinsic but rather, they are also psychologically driven by the anticipation of favourable compensation and rewards. Conversely, when employees do not anticipate adequate remuneration, their levels of engagement and commitment decrease, resulting in reduced effort and unsatisfactory performance.

This study established that employees' rewards and compensation are the main drivers of employee engagement and commitment in the Ugandan public service. Theoretically, therefore, most of the employees in the Ugandan public service are still at the basic needs level (Maslow's hierarchy of needs) and they are extrinsically motivated (Herzberg's Two Factor Theory) through compensation. Up to this point, the most influential factors fostering employees' commitment and engagement within the Uganda public service have been competitive remuneration, attractive

rewards, and generous retirement packages, which surpass those offered by the majority of private employers in Uganda.

Money in Uganda significantly impacts employee engagement and organizational commitment. Adequate compensation is not just about meeting basic needs only but it also directly influences employees' ability to support themselves and their families. The stable income is a cornerstone for survival and provides a sense of security. Fair compensation in Uganda, influences employees' social status, lifestyle, and aspirations. Importantly, money acts as a catalyst for individuals to achieve personal and professional goals, such as securing education for their children, owning a home, and saving for retirement. When employees feel financially secure and valued, it significantly enhances their work engagement and commitment to their organization.

In conclusion, this study highlighted the significant impact of HRM practices on employees' work engagement and organisational commitment in the Uganda Public Service. The findings demonstrate that well-managed HRM practices positively influence the levels of commitment and engagement among civil servants. Employees who expect favourable compensation and experience effective HRM practices are more likely to demonstrate high levels of engagement in their work and great commitment to their organization. The qualitative insights provided by the participants shed light on the factors that contribute to higher levels of commitment and engagement. Employees working in Authorities and Projects under Ministries, for instance, exhibited greater commitment and engagement due to better pay and facilitation they received compared to those in mainstream Ministries. This indicates that compensation plays a crucial role in driving employee behaviour, with poor compensation resulting in minimal effort being put into their jobs.

Furthermore, the study revealed that employee commitment is also influenced by factors such as remuneration, facilitation, and allowances. Participants emphasized the importance of fair compensation and adequate support for fostering commitment and engagement. The perception of unfairness arose when certain professional fields, such as Arts and Humanities, felt undervalued in comparison to science professionals whose salaries were increased. The study also indicated that specific HRM practices related to employee rewards and compensation have a greater impact on commitment.

Furthermore, the study revealed differences in commitment levels between younger and more experienced staff. New entrants into the job market were shown to be less committed when rewards and compensation were inadequate. Younger employees with few basic needs can be satisfied with a basic salary, whereas older staff with more needs and responsibilities require more comprehensive rewards. The study found out that , attractive retirement packages were found to compel employees who are about to retire to be more committed.

The findings of this study indicated that HRM practices are a significant determinant of work engagement and organisational commitment. Specifically, training and development, as well as compensation and rewards, emerged as prominent factors that enhance employee engagement and organisational commitment. While theoretical perspectives suggest that money is not the main motivator for performance, this study revealed that monetary compensation and rewards

play a dominant role in motivating employees to be engaged and committed to the Ugandan public service.

These findings highlight the importance of effective HRM practices in fostering employee commitment and work engagement in the Uganda Public Service. By recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of employees, the Ugandan public service can cultivate an environment that nurtures commitment and engagement, ultimately leading to improved employee performance.

New knowledge

This study enriched the understanding of the intricate interplay between HRM practices, employee engagement, and organizational commitment within the Uganda Public Service. It illuminated the critical role played by effective HRM strategies and equitable compensation in stimulating employee engagement and organisational commitment. This newfound knowledge provides a deeper insight into how effective HRM practices and a fair reward system, can profoundly influence and enhance employees' engagement in their roles and commitment to their organizational objectives.

Recommendation

- 1) The Ugandan government should prioritize the implementation of fair and competitive compensation packages for all public service employees. This involves, addressing both monetary and non-monetary rewards, and addressing any perceived inequities such as salary disparities between different professional fields, to ensure that employees feel valued and fairly rewarded for their contributions.
- 2) The Uganda government should invest in comprehensive training and development programs to enhance employee engagement. Providing opportunities for skill development and career advancement can motivate employees and foster their commitment and engagement to their work, ultimately improving their performance.
- 3) To further support employee commitment and engagement, the government should continue to offer attractive retirement packages as part of its Human resource management practices. This will not only reward long-term commitment but also provide a sense of financial security for employees, making the public service a more attractive employer.
- 4) The government of Uganda should instill a culture of appreciation and value recognition within its workforce because it fosters a heightened sense of commitment and engagement among employees.
- 5) Implementing these recommendations in the Uganda Public Service will foster an environment that attracts and retains highly committed and engaged employees, ultimately enhancing productivity and the overall effectiveness of the service.

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