

Effect of Unethical Recruitment and Selection Practices On Organizational Sustainability: A Case Study of Selected Organizations in Kericho and Nakuru County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: An organization which is perceived as ethically responsive has a better image as opposed to one that is perceived to be morally unresponsive. This paper focuses on the effect of unethical recruitment and selection practices on organizational sustainability. Recruitment is meant to generate many applicants to apply for a vacancy while selection is meant to ensure only the most suitable and qualified individual is employed. This research sought to find out the unethical recruitment and selection procedures in selected organizations in Kenya and their effect on organizational sustainability. The research employed a descriptive research design and used purposive sampling to sample the HR professionals that are concerned with recruitment and selection. Questionnaires used for data collection were tested for reliability and validity, and the data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings showed that most organizations engage in ethical hiring except a few that faced challenges in engaging in ethical recruitment and unethical recruitment and selection was found to have a negative impact on organizational sustainability. The study recommends in depth training to HR professionals on how to handle ethical challenges that they face during recruitment and selection so as to ensure they make ethical hiring decisions

KEY WORDS: Ethics, Unethical recruitment and selection, organizational sustainability, HR professionals,

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

According to Institute of Business Ethics (IBE), ethics is “the application of ethical values to business behavior”, where ethical values need to embed in the entire organization. Ethics, are the specific standards and moral principles on how we are supposed to behave, they define our moral rights and duties, and involve a commitment to doing the right thing. Ethic is therefore the application of moral standards in the working environment. According to Murage, Sang and Ngure Ethics are the standards of conduct governing behavior of an individual or a group

According to Bratton and Gold (2007) recruitment is ‘the process of generating a pool of capable people to apply to an organization for employment’, while Selection is ‘the process by which managers and others use specific instruments to choose from a pool of applicants the person(s) most likely to succeed in the job(s), given management and organizational goals and legal requirements. Recruitment and selection therefore primarily aims at attracting the maximum number of highly talented applicants so as to enable selection of the best candidates that will help the organization achieve competitiveness. According to Gommans and Musumbu (2014) in a research on the Role of Ethical Practice in Recruitment in Improving Performance of an Institution, initiation to ethical or unethical conduct within an organization starts at the recruitment and selection stage and sets the stage for ethical or unethical conduct which finally affects an organization’s performance as witnessed by the police service. It is important to not only follow ethical practices during hiring but to also hire employees who are ethical and value driven. According to Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2012) ethics play a very important role during the recruiting process and it is important the HR professionals maintain a professional and ethical standard when hiring employees.

According to Hollingworth and Valentine (2013), it is important to ensure that the recruiting and hiring process focus on attracting and selecting employees who share the organization’s ethical values. By hiring ethical employees, a company can create an ethical work place, however hiring employees that are not ethical, damages an organization’s corporate image as well as reduces stakeholder’s confidence and in the long run is costly to the organization both directly and indirectly. It is also important for organizations to create an ethical workplace that encourages employees to be ethical (Valentine and Barnett, 2007) the organizational culture, the norms, policies and procedures that employees are socialized to, should be consistent with the ethical work

environment the organization desires so as to encourage ethical reasoning and decision making. Organizations are responsible for creating social contexts that influence employees' ethical reasoning and ethical decisions making

1.2 Problem Statement

Many organizations today have put ethical issues on the margin as they focus on profit or results, with the ethical dimensions of HR policy and practice not being given great attention, this situation compromises sustainable development of such organizations. Recruitment and selection is meant to be done in an ethical manner so as to ensure that many qualified applicants apply for existing vacancies to enable the organization get the best person that fits the job and the organization for optimal performance. However there has been wide spread reports of corruption, nepotism, favouritism and discrimination which are unethical hiring practices that can prove to be very costly to the organization. According to Gommans and Musumbu (2010), unethical recruitment and selection practices have been cited as major contributors to the high levels of corruption and poor performance witnessed in the Police Service. According to Ogwaka, Namada and Sikalieh (2017), unethical recruitment and selection practices has a negative impact on the financial performance of organizations. Most organizations have a policy and legislative framework that they are meant to adhere to when recruiting individuals, however this has not been always been adhered to especially at the county level. This research intends to look at the effect of unethical recruitment and selection practices on sustainable development of selected organizations in Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1. To establish unethical recruitment and selection practices in selected organizations in Kenya
2. To determine the effect of unethical practices on organizational sustainability

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are some of the unethical recruitment and selection practices in selected organizations in Kenya?
2. What is the effect of unethical recruitment and selection practices on organizational sustainability in selected organizations in Kenya?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Ethical Recruitment and Selection

According to Hollingworth and Valentine (2013) recruitment and selection process is among the first step towards an organization creating an ethical work environment by first attracting employees with high ethical standards then secondly selecting and socializing the new employees with the desired ethical behaviour and reasoning. A research by Ogwaka, Namada and Sikalieh (2017), showed that recruitment and selection practices had a correlation of 0.737 with financial performance. The correlation coefficient for ethical selection and recruitment was 0.737 with a significance value of 0.014 which was less than 0.025 at the 5% level. This implied a strong positive correlation between ethical human resource practices and financial performance of listed firms in the Nairobi Stock Exchange.

According to a research by Murage, Sang and Ngunjiri on "Ethical Issues in Recruitment, Selection and Employee Performance in Public Universities in Nyeri County, Kenya" the findings of the study showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between ethical issues in recruitment and selection and employees' performance. The study showed that unethical recruitment and selection practices are eliminated when all job applicants are subjected to the same selection criteria, when all vacant positions are advertised widely so as to get a wide pool of applicants and when the recruiting managers follow the laid down recruitment and selection policies and procedures.

During selection use of a variety of selection tools can both lead to a more comprehensive assessment of an individual and reduce negative impact that results from use of one or two selection tools. While this may appear costly and time demanding, especially for managers in small companies, careful valid testing can not only offer legal protection, but also minimize bad hires, so as to reduce on human and financial costs. In addition ethical recruitment and selection practices require managers to keep the necessary documentation; this involves maintaining a file with such items as applications, tests and test scores, letters of recommendation, managers' notes from interviews, and any notes taken during reference checks.

Although careful, thorough screening is important, it is equally vital that hiring managers do not turn off potential employees or leave an unfavourable impression on potential applicants, since this will give the organization a negative public image and it will make it difficult for them to attract potential employees in future.

Recruitment and selection is said to be unethical when it ignores the laid down policies and procedures and results in hiring that based on unfairness, biasness or discrimination especially if the person hired does not fit the job or the culture of the organization. According to Wheeler (2004), some of the unethical recruiting and selection practices include; include how a position is represented to a candidate, how candidates are located, and how interviews are conducted. HR professionals need to focus more on ethics when recruiting, selecting, and placing job candidates into organizational roles, as well as provide realistic job previews. Selection process should also include honesty testing, and ethics-based interviewing approaches so as to hire employees that are ethics conscious and can fit within the organizations ethical environment, (Karren and Zacharias, 2007). Leaders also need to develop policies that enhance ethical context and encourage employees to act ethically on the job. For example, the creation of codes of conduct, which provide behavioral guidelines to workers, and ethics training, which teaches the different ethical issues that employees can possibly face, can help establish a prevailing sense of ethics in the workplace

2.4 Unethical recruitment on organizational sustainability

According to IISD (International Institute for Sustainable Development) “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future needs within the organization. Sustainable development is about finding better ways of doing things, both for the future and the present (Stankeviciute and Savaneviciene (2013).

Unethical recruitment and selection practices result in a person who is unfit for a particular job or organization holding a job for which they are not well suited (Onyeaghala and Hyacinth ,2016). This can lead to disciplinary problems, disputes, absenteeism, high labour turnover, fraud, poor service delivery to customers, suppressed creativity, innovations and learning, inability to cope with new challenges or changes, non-competitiveness, poor quality production, waste of organization’s money, time and other valuable resources all these can be very costly to an organization and can affect organizational sustainability

According to Hickins(1998) as cited by Alder and Gilbert (2006), More than two-thirds of the applicants surveyed by Integrity Search Inc. reported that they consider the recruitment and selection process to be a good indicator of how a company operates. Dysfunctional recruitment and selection process may be a symptom of a dysfunctional and unfair company. Applicants who feel the selection process is unfair may form a negative attitude toward the organization and be less likely to accept job offers. Applicants who feel unfairly treated will also be more likely to discourage others from applying for positions with the firm, this shows that unethical or unfair recruitment and selection practices results in the organization having a poor corporate image and earning a bad reputation.

Research indicates that the negative effects of unfair selection systems persist even among those who are offered and accept a job (Alder and Gilbert (2006). Unethical recruitment and selection practices therefore results in high turnover for employees who feel that there is a disconnect between their values and that of the organization. It also results in having employees with poor work attitudes and poor job/ organizational commitment and poor work attitudes. The final result is having employees who are not very productive.

According to Buckley et al, (2001), Perceptions of justice in selection systems have important implications such as their perception on being fairly treated and their perception of the organization as a good employer. In addition the organization can also be deliberate in its selection process so as to only select those individuals whose ethical values fit with the organizations ethical values

According to researchers (Mueller, Simon and Rich, 2012) organizations that condone unethical practices put their employees through ethical conflicts which may finally make the employees to feel frustrated and emotionally exhausted especially if they feel that their values are in conflict with the unethical behaviour found in the organization or is they are required to engage in unethical behaviour. In addition unethical recruitment and selection practices can also results in high legal costs especially if it is proven that the organization did not follow the law or due process during hiring. Therefore unethical recruitment and selection practices are not legally non defensible but can have costly legal implications to an organization since organizations also get legal suits because of lack of legal compliance during hiring. Ethical recruitment and selection can help to ensure that the organization hires the right employees with the required skills, knowledge, competence and ethical values that can guarantee its long term performance and survival.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

A descriptive research design was used to collect data from a cross section of different organizations

3.2 Target population

This research targeted the HR practitioners in 4 selected organizations in Kenya, these were; HR practitioners in Nakuru and Kericho County, as well as a public university in Kericho County and a private University in Nakuru County, the target respondents were 67 HR professional working in this organizations.

Target population	No. of HR personnel
Nakuru County HQ's	34
Kericho County HQ's	17
A Private University in Nakuru County	8
A Public University of in Kericho County	8
Total	67

3.3 Sampling design

Purposive sampling design was used so as to select only the HR practitioners that are involved in the recruitment and selection process as well as those that take part in performance management of employees, who can be able to assess to effect of unethical recruitment and selection on employee performance, these were 42 in number in all the 4 selected organizations

3.4 Data collection

Data was collected through the use of questionnaires that contained mainly structured, close ended questions with a few open ended questions that helped to probe the respondents. The validity of the research instrument was assessed by exposing it to HR and ethics experts who analysed and gave their input. The reliability was assessed through use of the Chronbach alpha test, where values of 0.8 were obtained which was above the recommended threshold value of 0.7

3.5 Data analysis and presentation

Data was mainly analysed through the use of descriptive statistics, where as content analysis was used to analyse the open ended questions, and data was presented through use of tables and charts.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Unethical recruitment and selection practices

Whereas 77% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that documented recruitment and selection procedures are strictly followed during recruitment and selection, 23% disagreed that recruitment and selection procedures are guided by organizational policies with 25.6% strongly agreeing and 30.8 agreeing that documented recruitment and selection procedures are strictly followed in the selection process..

It was established that some candidates are hired even when they don't meet the job requirements with 48% agreeing (28% strongly agreeing and 20%) that indeed unqualified candidates were being giving positions for which they don't qualify with some candidates being hired without going through the formal recruitment and selection process. Whereas 59% agreed that the best candidate is always given the job, 44% disagreed. This implies that although there are policies and guidelines to ensure that only the most suitable person fills a vacant position, this is not the case, 41% of the respondents disagreed that nepotism and tribalism is not a factor during recruitment and selection while 45% agreed that some individuals are employed because of having well connected individuals. 45% of the respondents agreed that the hiring practices were not transparent in their organizations.

From the findings it is clear that whereas the expectations would be that that recruitment and selection is done in an ethical matter, there are situations when this is not the case where the organizations disregard the laid down procedures and policies and instead chose to hire individuals who do not have the best fit for the job. These results are similar to a research by Onyeaghala and Hyacinth (2016) on the effects of recruitment and selection procedures on the efficiency of the public service in Nigeria where a descriptive survey design was applied and the major findings revealed that recruitment and selection procedures in public service are not strictly followed

Table 4.3: Unethical Recruitment and Selection practices

Responses	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Total
Documented recruitment and selection procedures are strictly followed in the selection process	46.2	30.8	7.7	10.3	5.0	100
In my organisation recruitment and selection is usually done based on human resource planning and organisational needs	25.6	46.2	2.6	17.9	7.7	100
T Candidates that are shortlisted usually have the	20.5	38.5	7.6	23.1	10.3	100

relevant qualifications and experience for the job						
Some candidates are hired even if they don't meet the requirement for the job	28.2	20.5	10.3	20.5	20.5	100
The same selection tool is used for all the candidates applying for the same position	25.6	35.9	15.4	12.8	10.3	100
Questions on ethical dilemmas and decision making are asked when interviewing potential employees	29.7	27	24.3	16.2	2.8	100
The organisation focuses on attracting and selecting employees who have strong ethical values	28.9	31.6	7.9	23.7	7.9	100
Nepotism and tribalism is not a factor when hiring decisions are made	25.6	23.1	10.3	15.4	25.6	100
Some candidates are hired without going through the formal recruitment and selection process	15.4	28.2	12.8	15.4	28.2	100
The best qualified candidate is always given the job	35.9	23.1	17.9	10.3	12.8	100
Hiring procedures are not transparent	21.0	23.7	13.2	18.4	23.7	100
In this organisation there has been cases of people hired because of having well connected individual within or outside the organisation	33.4	17.9	5.1	23.1	20.5	100
Public interest and organisational interest are always placed over personal interest when making recruitment and selection decisions	25.6	30.8	10.3	30.7	2.6	100
The organisation offers job previews before the final hire	30.8	12.8	23.1	20.5	12.8	100

Figure 1: Candidates hired without meeting requirements

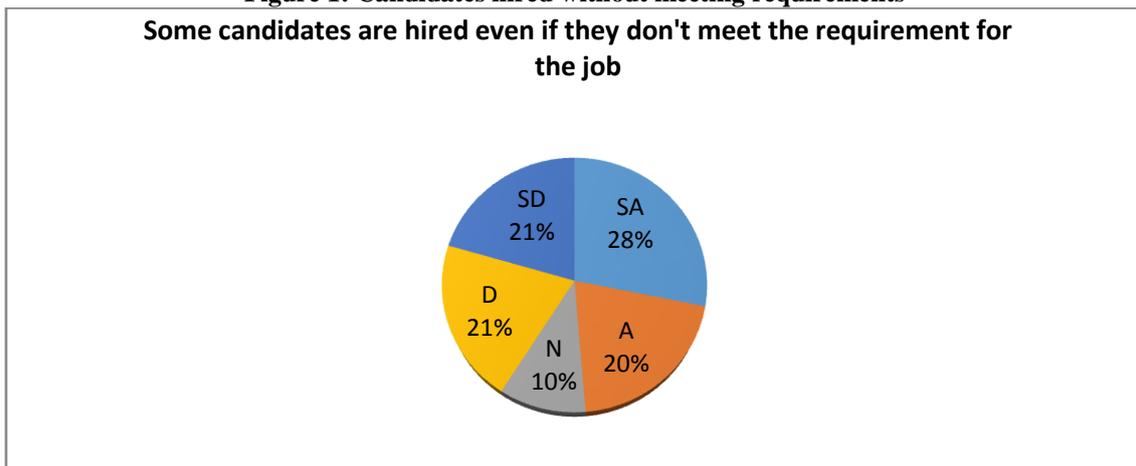


Figure 2: Recruitment and Selection is guided by policy

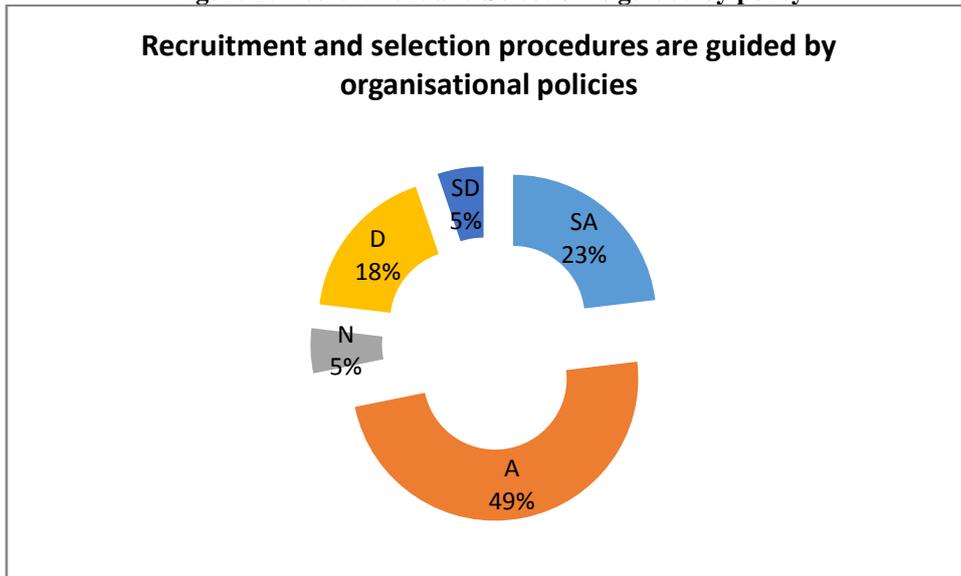


Figure 3: Some candidates are hired even if they don't meet the requirements

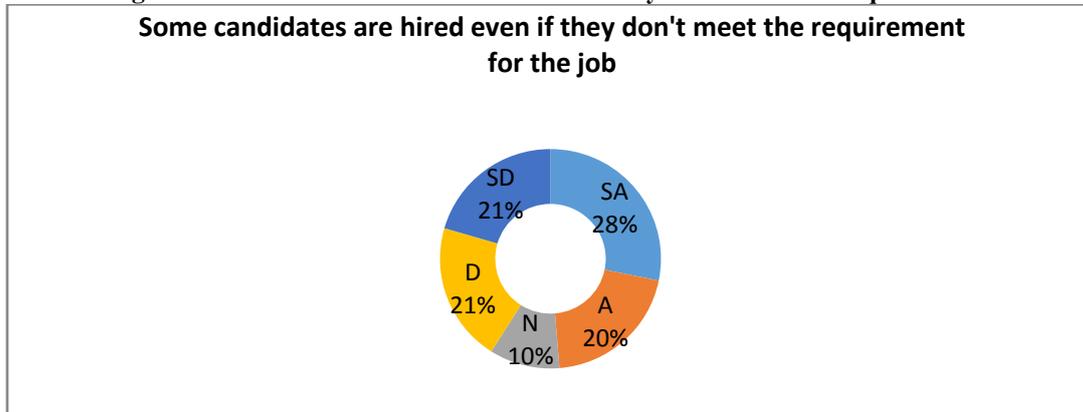


Figure 4: HR staff maintains professional and ethical standards



4.2 Effect of Unethical recruitment and selection on Organizational sustainability

When the respondents were asked an open question to state the challenges that HR professionals face during recruitment and selection, Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the main challenge facing HR professional during recruitment and selection was political interference or “orders from above” as cited by some of the respondents. A few of the respondents were also of the opinion that ethnicity, nepotism and pressure from the public was also another challenge facing HR professionals during recruitment and selection which made them disregard the laid down policies and procedures guiding recruitment and selection .

Majority of the respondents (83%) were of the opinion that unethical recruitment and selection practices has resulted in low productivity or low output since the individuals employed lack the required skills and competence. As a result they are unable to meet the set targets, there is also poor service delivery and increased customer dissatisfaction. In addition majority of the respondents were of the opinion that unethical recruitment and selection practices resulted in demoralizing the existing staff that are hired in the right channels. According to some of the respondents, the employees hired through unethical means have a “bad attitude, and are not loyal to the organizations but to the individuals who helped to be hired in the organizations” which according to some of the respondents has led to conflicts and unhealthy organizational culture and work culture. A few of the respondents were of the opinion that unethical recruitment and selection practices has also led to the challenge of retention of talented employees as well as an increase in the wage bill, which has also affected organizational sustainability. This is in agreement with a research by Ogwoka, Namada and Sikalieh (2017), on the Effect of Ethical Human Resource Management Practices on the Financial Performance of Listed Firms in the Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE), which should a strong correlation between ethical HR practices and financial performance of listed firms, where the correlation coefficient for ethical selection and recruitment was found to be 0.737. The results are also in agreement with the findings in a research by Gommans and Musumbu (2010) on the Role of Ethical Practice in Recruitment in Improving Performance of an Institution whose findings led to the conclusion that unethical recruitment and selection practices negatively affect the long term performance of an organization

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above findings unethical recruitment and selection practices involve not following the laid down policies and procedures which results in candidates who lack the requisite skills and competences being hired. HR professionals have a role of ensuring that they promote ethical recruitment and selection so as to ensure candidates are hired on merit and there is no form of discrimination or favoritism during hiring. However the major challenge that the HR professional face is that of political interference where powerful individuals influence recruitment and selection decisions. This has resulted in poor service delivery and low productivity in some of these organizations, which has had a negative impact on organizational performance. HR professionals have the responsibility of creating an ethical work culture and advising management on the need for ethical recruitment and selection practices as part of the key HR practice that will assist in having ethical and sustainable organizations that contribute positively for the betterment of humanity. This study recommends in-depth training to Kenyan HR professionals on how to handle ethical dilemmas especially during recruitment and selection processes so as to create and entrench ethical organizations.

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