
Training Practice and Employee Commitment in Selected County Governments in Kenya

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Abstract:

Purpose: The study assessed the effect of training practice on employee commitment in selected county governments in Kenya.

Material/methods: The study was anchored on Transformative Learning Theory and adopted a mixed research design integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. Proportionate sampling was used to select five county governments out of forty-seven. From a target population of 12,990 employees, a sample of 384 respondents was selected through stratified sampling. A pilot test was conducted to reduce instrumentation errors, strengthen reliability, and assess internal consistency. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and regression analysis to test the effect of training practice on employee commitment.

Findings: The regression results revealed that training practice had a positive and statistically significant effect on employee commitment in the selected county governments in Kenya. This indicates that stronger training practices are associated with higher levels of employee commitment.

Conclusion: The study concludes that training practice is significantly related to employee commitment in the selected county governments in Kenya. Enhancing training practices is therefore important for strengthening employee commitment and supporting effective public service delivery.

Value: The study provides evidence to inform human resource development in county governments by demonstrating that well-designed training practices contribute to employee commitment. It recommends strengthening training systems through training needs assessments, clear training goals, and structured training feedback to enhance employee competence, autonomy, and commitment. This can improve employee professionalism, reduce the need for close supervision, and enhance productivity and service quality in county administrations.

Keywords: Training Practice, Employee Commitment, County Governments, Human Resource

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1. Introduction

Globally, employee commitment has emerged as a key concern for both developed and developing nations, with organizations recognizing that committed employees are essential for achieving development goals (Waktola, 2021). Employee commitment yields numerous organizational benefits, such as goal alignment, improved performance, job satisfaction, and reduced turnover (Ahmad et al., 2020). However, statistics show that only 15% of the global workforce is actively committed to their jobs, with countries like Malaysia and Thailand scoring 48% and the Netherlands recording 31% (Wang & Wang, 2022; Kalia, Signgla & Kaushal, 2023). These low levels of commitment have been linked to high costs associated with recruitment, training, and reduced productivity. Among the HRM practices associated with improving commitment, training has been widely acknowledged as a powerful tool when implemented effectively.

In Africa, training practices are recognized as instrumental in enhancing employee commitment across various devolved governments (Abozed & Salem, 2020; Nansamba et al., 2024). However, challenges such as training needs mismatch, misaligned training goals and limited training feedback continue to affect commitment levels (Kamila, 2022; Ingebedion, 2022). Studies indicate that when employees are inadequately trained, there is a resultant decline in productivity, job satisfaction, and retention (Kiarie, Korir & Wachira, 2021). Training approaches—such as training needs assessment, training goals and training feedback—play a vital role in empowering employees with the skills required to perform effectively (Armstrong, 2019). Emerging evidence shows that newly recruited staff whose training needs and goals are addressed adapt more quickly to job roles, boosting both performance and employee commitment (Musango, 2021).

Training is not only relevant for performance in the current role but also enhances career advancement and social interaction, all of which contribute to increased employee attachment to their organizations (Kiarie, Korir, & Wachira, 2021). Mulu, Achuora, and Kalei (2023) emphasized the importance of on-the-job training, noting its capacity to expose employees to real work environments, promote skill acquisition, and familiarize them with company procedures. These elements improve job performance and foster high levels of commitment. In Ethiopia and Nigeria, recognition, supervisor support, and job satisfaction were positively linked to commitment, while countries like Ghana and Uganda reported improvements in performance and productivity after investing in employee training (Donkor & Zhuo, 2020; Bizunesh et al., 2023). Still, the proportion of change attributable specifically to training practice remains under-researched.

At the national level, county governments in Kenya have recognized the central role of human capital in achieving development goals, including Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (Njoroge, Kihoro, & Kosgei, 2020). However, studies show that many county employees are either unwilling to stay or are only committed due to systemic privileges (CoG, 2024). Ineffective or underfunded training programs have been identified as a key reason for this lack of commitment, with many employees feeling inadequately prepared for their roles (Mwaniki & Omuya, 2024). Although tools such as Balanced Scorecards and 360-degree feedback mechanisms have been

introduced (Mwema, Were, & Ndeti, 2022), challenges persist due to bureaucratic hurdles, limited skilled staff, and underinvestment in capacity-building. Moreover, counties have failed to integrate training into broader HR strategies, resulting in poor alignment with organizational goals (Awino & Korir, 2020; Auditor General, 2022).

The persistent low levels of employee commitment in selected county governments have serious implications for development and service delivery. While previous studies in Kenya have examined HRM practices, they often suffer from contextual or methodological gaps, with limited focus on the critical role of training in shaping employee commitment (Obunga, Were, & Muchelule, 2024; Aden & Omuya, 2024). This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by examining how training practices—specifically training needs assessment, training goals and training feedback to contribute to employee commitment in selected county governments. With mounting audit queries, critical skill gaps, and reduced budget utilization tied to staff turnover (Taiko, 2024; CoG, 2024), the need to investigate training as a strategic HRM for enhancing employee commitment has never been more urgent. Thus, the study hypothesized that:

H₀₁: Training practice has no significant effect on employee commitment in selected county government in Kenya.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on Human Capital Theory (HCT), advanced by Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964), which conceptualizes employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities as valuable assets that can be enhanced through deliberate investment in training. Training is viewed as a strategic human resource management practice that increases employee productivity, adaptability, and organizational value, rather than a mere operational cost. By strengthening employee competencies, organizations gain long-term benefits such as improved performance, innovation, and competitiveness, while employees enhance their employability, self-efficacy, and career prospects (Becker, 1993; Sweetland, 1996; Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Tharenou et al., 2007).

In the context of county governments, Human Capital Theory explains how continuous training fosters affective, continuance, and normative commitment by strengthening employees' sense of organizational support, job security, and professional growth (Koster et al., 2011; Wright & McMahan, 2011). Although the theory has been criticized for its strong economic orientation and its assumption that training automatically leads to improved performance (Marginson, 2019), evidence shows that positive outcomes depend on strategic alignment, effective training design, and supportive organizational systems (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Noe, 2017). Overall, the theory provides a robust lens for understanding how training practices enhance employee commitment and support long-term organizational effectiveness within county governments in Kenya. The conceptualization of the study was illustrated by the conceptual framework in figure 1.

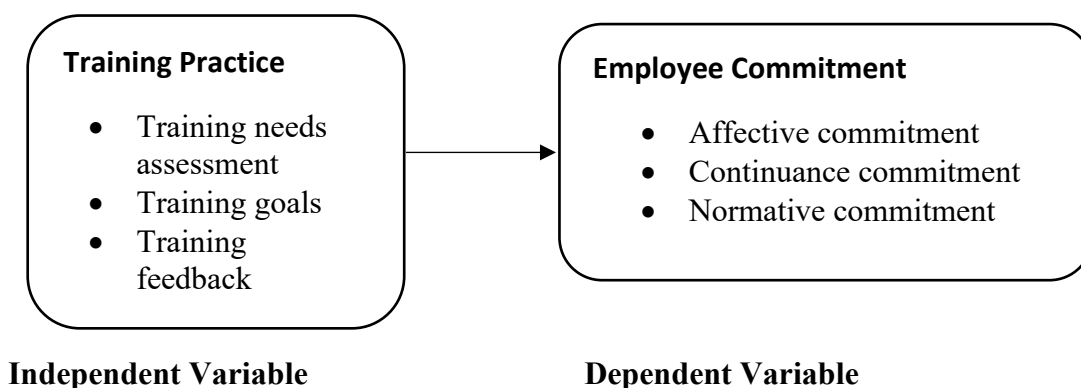


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Empirical Review

Empirical evidence across studies consistently underscores the critical role of structured training practices especially training goals in influencing employee commitment. Lorot (2024) revealed that the absence of well-defined training goals often leads to poor employee performance and frequent mistakes, ultimately reducing organizational productivity. Conversely, setting clear training goals equips employees with necessary skills, reduces resource wastage, and builds a more committed workforce. Mwangi and Munyua (2023) added that organizations with no goal-oriented training observed diminished performance, recommending tailored support for staff with limited skills. Gatayu and Kinyua (2020) emphasized the significance of organizational knowledge acquisition, indicating its strong, positive relationship with motivation, job satisfaction, and employee commitment. They argued that declining performance toward the later stages of employment often reflected wanting employee commitment, further linking it to ineffective training practices.

Complementing the discussion, Mire, Butali, and Ayora (2024) highlighted that training needs assessments are instrumental in identifying skills and knowledge gaps before they adversely affect productivity and retention. Proactively addressing these gaps not only enhances individual performance but also strengthens commitment to organizational goals. Gatayu and Kinyua (2020) concurred, stressing that needs analysis is a preventative strategy that builds loyalty by aligning employee development with performance expectations. Ndai and Makhamara (2020) pointed out that feedback mechanisms following training are equally important in maintaining commitment. Feedback ensures that training objectives are met and highlights areas for future improvement. Njoroge, Kihoro, and Kosgei (2020) reinforced the importance of scientific feedback mechanisms in improving group cohesion, managing workplace stress, and resolving relational challenges—all of which contribute to greater employee dedication.

Further empirical studies demonstrated that training outcomes such as skills acquisition, job security, and promotion opportunities significantly affect employee commitment. Lorot (2024) explained that employees are more likely to remain loyal to organizations offering structured learning opportunities and relevant technical training, especially when linked to career advancement. Chepkoskey, Namusonge, and Makokha

(2019), in a study of the telecommunications sector, found a strong link between employee commitment and perceived availability of training, as well as supervisor and peer support. Interestingly, they noted that motivation to learn and perceived benefits of training alone did not significantly influence commitment, signaling the need for more holistic training strategies. Similarly, Muli, Achuora, and Kalei (2023) found that training in Machakos County improved employee performance, and Mire, Butali, and Ayora (2024) confirmed this positive relationship in Garissa. However, both studies acknowledged that while training improved performance, its impact on commitment was indirect and complex, emphasizing the need for integrated training models.

Other Kenyan-based studies offered further insight into the nuanced relationship between training and employee commitment. Awino and Korir (2021) confirmed that career training significantly influenced employee commitment and that reward systems enhanced this relationship. Mwangi and Munyua (2023) established that training and development accounted for 79.3% of productivity among investment firms, a strong indicator of its importance. Musango (2021), however, cautioned that while on-the-job training is vital, it may result in increased employee turnover if not accompanied by promotions or improved working conditions. Ndai and Makhamara (2020) also emphasized that untrained or less-skilled employees showed low levels of commitment and were more likely to exit the organization. While most studies affirmed the connection between training and employee commitment, there remained a notable gap in examining training goals, needs assessments, and feedback mechanisms—dimensions critical to building sustained employee dedication and organizational performance.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopted a mixed research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine human resource management practices and employee commitment in selected Kenyan county governments. The rationale for using this design was to enhance reliability, credibility, and depth of understanding, as quantitative data revealed trends while qualitative data provided explanations and context (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013; Creswell, 2013).

4.1. Target Population and Sampling

The study focused on employees working in county governments in Kenya, specifically targeting 12,990 staff from five purposively selected counties—Elgeyo-Marakwet, Baringo, Trans Nzoia, West Pokot, and Bungoma—due to declining employee commitment, high turnover, and minimal budget allocations for human resource issues (CIDP, 2022; Taiko, 2024). Using Cochran's formula and a 95% confidence level, a representative sample of 384 respondents was calculated. Stratified sampling was applied across three employment categories middle-level management, supervisory, and operative staff to ensure proportional representation. This was followed by simple random sampling within each stratum. Additionally, purposive sampling was used to select the five counties, aligning with Mugenda and Mugenda's (2013) guidance that a 10% sample of the population is adequate. This mixed sampling approach enhanced inclusivity, relevance, and credibility of the findings regarding employee commitment in the selected county governments.

4.2 Data Collection

The study employed both primary and secondary data collection methods to ensure comprehensive insight into training practice and employee commitment. Primary data was gathered using structured questionnaires, comprising both open- and closed-ended questions aligned with the study objectives, and designed in Likert scale format to facilitate quantification. Closed-ended questions provided measurable data, while open-ended ones allowed deeper understanding of respondents' perspectives. The questionnaires were administered to various staff categories, and open-ended interview schedules were directed at middle-level managers. Secondary data was sourced from published HRM journals, books, and county reports, enriching the study with theoretical and empirical insights. Data collection procedures began with ethical clearance, followed by fieldwork using a drop-and-pick method with the help of trained assistants. A pilot study involving 38 participants (10% of the sample) was conducted to test validity and reliability. Content validity was ensured through expert review, and factor analysis was applied to verify the significance of measurement items using eigenvalues and KMO. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with constructs scoring above 0.7 deemed internally consistent. Together, these approaches ensured methodological rigor, enhanced reliability, and strengthened the validity of findings.

4.3 Data Analysis and Model Specification

The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were computed using SPSS version 26 to summarize and present quantitative data, while qualitative responses were analyzed using content analysis to identify and interpret recurring themes. Correlation analysis was conducted using Pearson's r to assess the strength and direction of relationships between variables. To test the study hypothesis, regression analysis was applied. Hypothesis testing relied on t-tests and corresponding p-values at a 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was that t-values greater than 1.96 and p-values less than 0.05 led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, while t-values below 1.96 and p-values greater than 0.05 resulted in failure to reject the null hypothesis. Additionally, the F-test and its p-value were used to evaluate the overall significance and goodness-of-fit of the regression model. A p-value below 0.05 indicated that the model was statistically significant and provided a good fit for the data. The model is as shown below.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y= Employee commitment, X_1 = Training practice, ε = Error term
 β_0, β_1 , are Regression coefficients to be estimated.

5. Research Findings and Discussion

This section presents the research findings and discussion. The study recorded a high response rate of 88.8%, with 341 out of 384 respondents completing the survey, surpassing the 70% threshold considered very good by Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), largely due to the researcher's personal administration of questionnaires. Background information revealed that 53.4% of respondents were male and 46.6% female, indicating a fairly balanced gender representation across the selected county governments in Kenya. Most respondents were well-educated, with 47% having college education, 35% university degrees, 6% postgraduate qualifications, and only 12% with

secondary education, suggesting a knowledgeable respondent base capable of giving reliable feedback. In terms of work experience, 48.9% had served 10–15 years, 28.7% for 5–10 years, and 22.4% for-under 5 years, indicating strong institutional memory and long-term employee commitment among the majority, which enriched the study’s insights into the relationship between Training practice and employee commitment.

5.1: Descriptive Results

The descriptive results indicate a moderately positive perception of training practices in selected county governments (composite Mean = 3.16, SD = 0.65). Respondents generally acknowledged the importance of training, particularly training needs assessment and goal setting, with strong agreement that counties regularly conduct training needs assessments (Mean = 4.41) and that training helps employees handle challenging tasks (Mean = 3.67). Employees also perceived that training improves morale, confidence, and preparedness for future responsibilities, suggesting that training contributes positively to employee competence and motivation. However, perceptions were mixed regarding fairness, transparency, and feedback mechanisms. While some respondents agreed that training needs assessments are fair and transparent, lower mean scores were recorded for alignment of training with established goals and provision of timely, useful feedback. Despite these gaps, feedback that supports skill enhancement and handling difficult situations was viewed positively. Overall, the findings suggest that although training practices are recognized as valuable and impactful, inconsistencies in implementation, alignment, and feedback remain. Strengthening these areas would enhance the effectiveness of training practices and further support employee commitment within county governments.

Table 1: Descriptive Results Training Practice

n=341	Mean	Std. Dev
The county regularly conducts training needs assessments for its employees.	4.41	1.09
The county’s training needs assessments are fair and objective.	3.50	1.20
The county’s practice of conducting training needs assessments is transparent.	3.20	1.28
The county regularly trains its employees and has set clear training goals to help them handle challenging work.	3.67	1.09
The county ensures that all employees receive training aligned with established training goals.	2.32	1.30
The county provides timely and accurate training feedback to its employees.	2.63	1.37
The county provides training feedback that helps employees stay up to date in handling difficult situations through regular staff trainings.	3.23	1.28
Training practice	3.16	0.65

The descriptive findings indicate moderate employee commitment across selected county governments in Kenya (composite Mean = 3.05, SD = 0.56). Respondents generally expressed positive perceptions regarding long-term career intention, emotional attachment, and job retention, with many indicating that they were likely to

remain in county employment and felt emotionally connected to their jobs. Continuance commitment was also evident, as a considerable number of employees reported staying due to limited alternative opportunities and perceived costs of leaving. These results suggest that job stability and economic considerations play an important role in sustaining employee commitment. Normative commitment was present but comparatively weaker, as perceptions related to moral obligation and timing of leaving showed mixed responses. The strongest driver of commitment was values such as job security, seniority, benefits, and authority, which recorded the highest mean score. Overall, while employees demonstrate a blend of affective, continuance, and normative commitment, the variability in responses highlights differences in motivational drivers across individuals and counties. These findings are consistent with prior studies (Theresa & Vijayabanu, 2016; Tugel & Kilic, 2021; Armstrong, 2019), underscoring the role of shared values, emotional attachment, and perceived obligations in shaping employee commitment.

Table 2: Employee Commitment in Selected County Governments in Kenya

	Mean	Std. Dev.
I am likely to spend the rest of my career working for the county government.	3.29	1.3
I feel emotionally attached to my job in the county government.	3.28	1.42
I am not likely to leave my current job for another one.	3.33	1.38
One of the reasons I do not leave my county job is the scarcity of alternative opportunities.	3.25	1.43
Even if leaving might be advantageous, I feel it would not be the right thing to do at this time.	3.06	1.34
I am not leaving my job because I feel a sense of obligation to the people in the county.	3.30	1.26
I am committed to my job because of certain values such as seniority, benefits, authority, and job security.	3.71	1.16
Employee Commitment	3.05	0.56

5.2 Correlation Results

The correlation analysis in this study assessed the strength and direction of the relationship between human resource management practices and employee commitment using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r), following Collis and Hussey's (2013) guidelines. The results indicated a moderate positive and significant relationship between training practice and employee commitment ($r = 0.492$, $p = 0.000 < 0.01$), suggesting that improvements in training practices are associated with increased employee commitment in county governments. This aligns with Mire, Butali, and Ayora (2024) and Muli, Achuora, and Kalei (2023), who found significant positive links between training and employee performance.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

		Employee Commitment	Training Practice
Employee Commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Training Practice	Pearson Correlation	.492**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

** Correlation was significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5.3. Regression Results (Hypotheses Testing)

The regression analysis aimed to determine the effect of training practice on employee commitment in selected county governments in Kenya. Employing simple linear regression, the study generated key statistical indicators: the coefficient of determination (R^2), F-statistic, beta coefficient (β), and t-test value to examine the predictive strength and significance of training practice on employee commitment. The model results showed that training practice had a statistically significant effect on employee commitment, with an $R^2 = 0.242$, suggesting that 24.2% of the variance in employee commitment was explained by training practice alone, while 75.8% of the variability was attributed to other factors not included in this particular model. The F-statistic = 108.235 with a p-value of 0.000 confirmed the overall model's goodness-of-fit at the 5% significance level.

The regression results indicates that training practice held to constant zero ($\beta_0=1.718$), employee commitment in the selected county governments in Kenya would be 1.718, while the unstandardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.422$) indicates that for every unit increase in training practice, there is a corresponding 0.422unit increase in employee commitment in the selected county governments in Kenya. Therefore, estimated regression is hereby expressed as $Y = 1.718 + 0.422X_1$. The t-value = 10.404, which exceeds the critical value of 1.96, and the p-value of 0.000, led to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{01}) that training practice has no significant effect on employee commitment. This implies that training practice interventions such as training needs assessments, training goals, and training feedback contribute to strengthening employee commitment in the selected County government in Kenya.

These findings support existing empirical literature that highlights the central role of training practice in enhancing employee attitudes, productivity, and loyalty. For instance, Ndai and Makhamara (2020) emphasized that training initiatives positively affect employees' ability to meet personal and institutional goals, thereby enhancing their commitment. Similarly, Awiono and Korir (2020) observed that career-aligned training not only improves individual capabilities but also fosters long-term engagement with the organization. Moreover, Gatayu and Kinyua (2020) argued that organizations investing in consistent and structured employee training tend to experience higher levels of commitment, as trained employees feel valued and are more likely to reciprocate with loyalty and improved performance. Furthermore, the results align with transformative learning theory, which posits that adult learners engage more deeply with their roles when learning challenges their assumptions and leads to new perspectives (Mezirow, 1997). In the context of county governments, training fosters not just skill acquisition but also cognitive and emotional engagement with work,

leading to higher levels of normative and affective commitment. This emotional investment is particularly crucial in public institutions, where job demands can be high and extrinsic motivators limited.

Table 4: Regression Model; Training Practices and Employee Commitment

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.718	0.131		13.154	0.000
	Training practice	0.422	0.041	0.492	10.404	0.000
	R Squared	0.242				
	Adjusted R Squared	0.240				
	F statistic	108.235				
	P value	0.000				

a Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment

6. Conclusions

The study generally concluded that training practice significantly had effect on employee commitment in the selected county government in Kenya. From the findings it can be inferred that the dimensions of training practice (training needs assessment, training goals, and training feedback) significantly affects employee commitment in the selected county government in Kenya. In conclusion basing on the findings on the prediction that training practice has no significant relationship with the employee commitment in selected county governments in Kenya; the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative. Therefore, the study concluded that training practice had a significant relationship with employee commitment in selected county governments in Kenya.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following managerial and policy recommendations were proposed in relation to each objective of the study.

7.1 Managerial Recommendations

Since training practice is preferred in enhancing employee commitment, the study recommends the selected county governments in Kenya to rethink on what constitutes training practice to avoid its ineffectiveness. To improve effectiveness of training practice county governments should improve training practice and should include training needs assessment, training goals and training feedback programs, this ensure that employees carry their duties and responsibilities without much supervision in the future. Training instills smooth transfer of technical know-how to the human resources,

this increase their knowledge and skills enabling them do their work with professionalism. This would ensure an increase in productivity and the quality of work done by human resources in the selected county government in Kenya and in turn increases their commitment. The study recommends that the the selected county governments should provide training for more knowledge and skills to give employee confidence in handling their work.

7.2 Policy Recommendations

The study recommends that county governments should come up with a policy on training that emphasize training needs assessment, establish training goals, and ensure prompt training feedback as part of employee training; this would lead to achievement of individual and organizational goals. The study recommends establishment of training policy that enhances technical knowledge that develop pool of professionals within county governments.

8. Further Research

This study did not include all other human resource management practices and a further study is recommended to include other human resource management practices which may affect employee commitment among county governments in Kenya. This was informed by the result of the multiple regressions which revealed that training explained 12.1% of the variation in employee commitment in selected county governments in Kenya, thus there remains 87.9% variation explained by other variables. The study was carried out among 5 out of 47, thus representing 10% of county governments in Kenya, there was need to carry similar research on the remaining 42 counties in Kenya. Thus 90% of the county government in Kenya lacked similar study. There is need to carry similar study so as to validating the results of this study because employees in different county governments may depict different levels of commitment.

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