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# Role Of HR Professional In Maintaining Ethical Hiring Practices In Selected Private And Public Organizations In Nakuru And Kericho County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** *Ethics is a moral philosophy which provides a standard for deciding on what is right or wrong, it is therefore very important to all organizations. 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 role of the HR professional in ensuring there is ethical recruitment and selection in an organization. Recruitment and selection is said to be ethical when it is done according to the laid down policies and procedures and results in hiring that based on fairness, free from biasness or discrimination. Where the person hired has the skills and competencies required for the job and also fits the ethical culture of the organization and impacts organizational performance positively. This research employed an exploratory research design and used purposive sampling to sample the HR professionals that are concerned with recruitment and selection in selected private and public organizations in Kericho and Nakuru County, Kenya. The findings showed that there is a positive and significant linear relationship between role of HR professionals and ethical recruitment and selection procedures, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.793 and a p- value of 0.000 and an R square value of 0.629, which means that HR professionals contribute 62.9% towards ensuring ethical recruitment and selection procedures are followed. From the findings the study concludes that, the HR professionals have a critical role to play in ensuring there is ethical recruitment and selection. The study recommends in depth training to HR professionals on how to handle ethical dilemmas and on the need for the HR professionals to play their role as custodians of ethics in organizations.*

**Keywords:** *Ethics, Recruitment and selection, Ethical role, HR professionals, Recruitment and selection procedures*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND OF STUDY

There are many definitions of ethics, among this definition is that “ethics is the study of individual and collective moral awareness, judgement, character and conduct (Petrick and Quinn, 1997, as cited by Winstanley and Woodall, 2002). 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 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 Kenyan 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, by creating an ethical 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

## 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 so as 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 in Kenya, of corruption, nepotism, favouritism and other forms of discrimination which has resulted in 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. This research intends to look at the role of HR professionals in ensuring ethical recruitment and selection in selected organizations in Kenya.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ✓ To explore unethical recruitment and selection procedures in selected organizations in Kenya
- ✓ To explore the role of the HR professional in maintaining ethical recruitment and selection practices in selected organizations in Kenya

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ✓ What are some of the unethical recruitment and selection procedures in selected organizations in Kenya?
- ✓ What role does the HR professional play in maintaining ethical recruitment and selection practices in selected organizations in Kenya in selected organizations in Kenya?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. UNETHICAL RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PRACTICES

An ethical recruitment and selection practice is where laid down policies and procedures are followed and where there are no forms of discrimination or unfairness in the hiring process. Ethical recruitment and selection should result in a person with the correct skills and qualifications being hired and placed in the right job. 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.

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. 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 exists disharmony 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 if they are required to engage in unethical behaviour. In addition unethical recruitment and selection practices can also result 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.

#### B. ROLE OF HR PROFESSIONAL IN ETHICAL RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

According to Winstanley and Woodall (2002), HR professional play the role of the guardian of ethics and ethical stewardship in organizations. The ethical role of the HR professional is seen as including that of communicating the codes of ethical conduct, providing training in ethics, managing compliance and monitoring and taking the lead in conducting themselves ethically and acting as ethical role models. The HR professional is meant to be ethically sensitive and be able to look at the ethical dimensions in HR issues as well as use ethical reasoning so as to be able to identify appropriate ethical frameworks with which to handle ethical dimensions in HR issues.

The process of recruitment starts with clear specifications of the HR needs in terms of numbers, skills sets and competencies and a determination on how to meet the HR needs either in-house or through external recruitments. The HR professional therefore has the responsibility of developing a comprehensive HR plan, before they can start any recruitment plan. The HR professional also has the responsibility of generating high recruitment yields so as to increase the chances of making a good selection. They should not place misleading advertisements for jobs, or misrepresent the requirements of a particular position, nor misrepresent the position or performance of the organization, and should, select the best employees to hire not based on any form of discrimination or favoritism, and should provide realistic job previews so that the job applicant gets a preview of the job before being hired.

Other ethical roles and responsibilities of HR professionals during recruitment and selection include; treating all the job applicants with dignity and respect and upholding their rights, and making selection decisions that are best for the organization, not allowing themselves to be

compromised when making selection decisions but putting the best interest of the organization first and making selection decisions based on merit. Where the organization provides special considerations during recruitment and selection, for example affirmative action, where certain groups are given special considerations, these considerations should be well stated in the company's policy statement, any preferential treatment should be one that is legally allowed.

HR practitioners should perform their advisory role effectively by putting in place code of ethics, training employees on ethical conduct, being good role models as well as conducting ethical monitoring and audits. The HR professional also has the role of recruiting at minimal costs and ensuring that the laid down procedures and policies are followed so as to protect the organization from any legal costs.

According to Chaubey (2014), HR professionals have the responsibility of defining the acceptable ethical behaviour as well as communicating specialized ethical codes, and updating or elaborating on the existing or expected ethical behaviour. Training on ethics also helps organizational members to uphold ethical standards that give the organization a good reputation. According to Mathenge (2011), HR professionals can offer 3 types of training so as to develop ethical behaviours in employees, these are; "trainings on how to diagnose potential ethical problematic situations, training on how to apply ethical frameworks to solve these ethical problematic situations and training on how to communicate and reward ethical standards". Therefore according to Mathenge (2011) "clear guidelines on ethical practices have to be established and incorporated in human resource training and eventual practical management approaches be established in organizations to be overseen by integrity and ethical committees" so as to entrench ethical behaviours within the organizations.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### A. RESEARCH DESIGN

An exploratory research design was used to collect data from a cross section of different organizations

#### B. TARGET POPULATION

This research targeted four organizations located in Kericho and Nakuru counties in Kenya, East Africa. The target respondents were 67 HR practitioners who take part in the recruitment process in these four organizations. The organizations consisted of two county governments and two universities.

| Target population                | No. of HR personnel |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Organization 1 in Nakuru County  | 34                  |
| Organization 2 in Nakuru County  | 17                  |
| Organization 3 in Kericho County | 8                   |
| Organization 4 in Nakuru         | 8                   |

|        |    |
|--------|----|
| County |    |
| Total  | 67 |

Table 1: Target Population

### C. 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.

### D. 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 0.93 were obtained which was above the recommended threshold value of 0.7.

### E. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

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

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the 42 questionnaires that were issued to the HR professionals that took part in recruitment process in these four organizations, 39 were returned giving a response rate of 93% which is acceptable when conducting research.

### A. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

When the respondents were asked if they had formal training in Human Resource Management, 85% responded positively while 15% who are working in the HR function lacked formal training in Human Resource Management, this is shown in table 2. This implies that these individuals may not be knowledgeable about the correct recruitment and selection practices and procedures that can ensure ethical hiring.

|      |      | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|------|------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Vali | Yes  | 33        | 85      | 84.6          |
|      | No   | 6         | 15      | 15.4          |
|      | Tota | 39        | 100.0   | 100.0         |

Table 2: Do you have formal training in Human Resource Management

When the respondents were asked if their organizations had any written standards on ethical business conduct 82% responded positively while 18% lacked written standards that

can act as a guide to them so as to ensure when they are faced with ethical dilemmas they can make the correct ethical. This implies that they lack clear guidelines to guide them when faced with ethical dilemmas.

|      |      | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|------|------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Vali | Yes  | 32        | 82      | 82.1          |
|      | No   | 7         | 18      | 17.9          |
|      | Tota | 39        | 100.0   | 100.0         |

Table 3: Does your organisation have any written standard of ethical business conduct

When the respondents were asked if some candidates are hired even when they don't meet the job requirements, 28% strongly agreed while 20% agreed, 42% disagreed while 10% were neutral. From the response 48% agreed that there were instances where candidates were hired without the necessary job prerequisites. This implies that although recruitment and selection should ensure there is a correct job fit in terms of hiring people with the right job skills and qualifications and placing them in the right jobs, there were situations where individuals were placed in jobs that they were not qualified for.



Figure 1: Candidates hired without meeting the requirement

### B. INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

Correlation analysis was carried out to determine the relationship between role of HR professionals and ethical recruitment and selection. Some of the items in ethical recruitment and selection procedures that were analyzed included the following: strictly following recruitment and selection procedures, ensuring recruitment and selection is based on Human resource planning and organizational needs, only short listing candidates that meet the relevant qualifications and experience, ensuring the recruitment and selection process is transparent as well as ensuring that recruitment and selection is not based on favoritism, nepotism or tribalism.

The results that were obtained as shown in table 4 showed that there is a positive and significant linear relationship between role of HR professionals and ethical recruitment and selection procedures, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.793 and a p- value of 0.000. These findings show that HR professionals play a critical role in ensuring that there is ethical hiring in organizations. This is because as the role of HR professionals in ethical recruitment is enhanced there is an increase in ethical recruitment and selection procedures. These findings agree with a research conducted by Winstanley and Woodall (2002) which showed that HR professional play the role of the guardian of ethics and ethical stewardship in organizations.



|                                            |                     | Ethical Recruitment & selection procedures | Role of HR professionals |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ethical Recruitment & selection procedures | Pearson Correlation | 1                                          | .793**                   |
|                                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                                            | .000                     |
|                                            | N                   | 39                                         | 39                       |
| Role of HR professionals                   | Pearson Correlation | .793**                                     | 1                        |
|                                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                                       |                          |
|                                            | N                   | 39                                         | 39                       |

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

Table 4: Correlations

Regression analysis was also used to find out if the independent variable of ethical recruitment and selection practices predicts the ethical role of HR professionals during recruitment and selection. The findings in table 5 show that role of HR professionals has an R square value of 0.629, which means that HR professionals contribute 62.9% towards ensuring ethical recruitment and selection procedures are followed. In addition the standardized and unstandardized coefficients indicate that  $B_0$  is 1.432 units. This can be interpreted as meaning that when there is no role of HR professionals, the model predicts that ethical recruitment and selection practices will have 1.432 units, but when the role of the HR professionals is introduced then ethical recruitment and selection increases by 0.551 units or 55.1%. This means that 55.1% of ethical and recruitment practices can be attributed to the role of the HRM professional.

This model can be defined as follows;

Ethical Recruitment and selection =  $1.432 + 0.551 (\text{Role of HR professionals}) + e$

These findings are supported by studies done by Chaubey (2014) and Mathenge (2011), which showed that HR professionals have the role of defining and communicating the acceptable ethical behaviour, ethical codes of conducts and ethical guidelines when employees are faced with ethical dilemmas and acting as role models by following the laid down policies and guidelines.

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .793 <sup>a</sup> | .629     | .619              | .4187                      |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Role of HR professionals

Table 5: Regression Analysis

| Model                      | Unstandardized Coefficients B | Std. Error | Standardized Coefficients Beta | t     | Sig. |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|-------|------|
| (Constant)                 | 1.432                         | .259       |                                | 5.528 | .000 |
| 1 Role of HR professionals | .551                          | .069       | .793                           | 7.923 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Ethical Recruitment procedures

Table 6: Coefficients

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. CONCLUSION

The study sought to explore the unethical recruitment and selection procedures as well as to establish the role of the HR

professional in ensuring ethical recruitment and selection in organizations. Based on the findings the study concludes that there are some unethical recruitment and selection practices in some of the organizations that were surveyed. However it also showed that the HR professionals play a critical role in ensuring that there is ethical recruitment and selection in organizations.

### B. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that HR professionals need training on how to handle the challenge of ethical dilemmas in their HR duties. In addition they also need to promote ethical recruitment and selection by ensuring that they advise the top management and stakeholders on the importance of ethical hiring practices on the success of the organization.

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