

Effect of Professional Development Practices on Employee Retention in Floriculture Firms in Nakuru County

¹*Patricia Kiprop, ²Prof. Ronald Chepkilot, ³Dr. Jeptepkeny Bowen

¹Postgraduate Student, Kabarak University

^{2,3}Kabarak University

Abstract: Employee retention is critical for the sustainability and success of any organization, particularly in high-turnover industries such as floriculture. This study examines the effect of professional development practices on employee retention in floriculture firms in Nakuru County, Kenya. The research is anchored in the expectancy theory and self-determination theory, which emphasize the importance of aligning employee expectations with organizational support and development opportunities. A descriptive research design was adopted, involving a census of 55 employees from 55 floriculture firms in the county. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using correlation and regression models to assess the relationship between professional development practices and employee retention. The findings revealed a significant positive impact of professional development initiatives, including mentoring, coaching, and job rotation, on employee retention. Employees who received continuous skill development opportunities were more likely to stay with their firms, thereby reducing turnover rates. The study concludes that investing in professional development is essential for floriculture firms seeking to retain talent, enhance productivity, and remain competitive in the industry. The research recommends that firms prioritize structured professional development programs as a strategic approach to improving employee retention and long-term organizational sustainability.

Keywords: *Employee retention, professional development practices, mentoring, coaching, and job rotation*

I. Introduction

In the modern business environment, retaining skilled employees is a critical challenge for organizations, particularly due to increased mobility and competition for talent (Kaur, 2017). Professional development practices have emerged as a key strategy to address this issue, enabling organizations to retain their workforce by providing opportunities for continuous learning and career growth. These practices include mentoring, coaching, job rotation, and formal training programs that help employees enhance their skills and advance within the organization (Singh et al., 2020). By investing in the professional growth of employees, firms can build a more competent and loyal workforce, which ultimately reduces turnover (Papa et al., 2020).

The relationship between professional development practices and employee retention is particularly relevant for the floriculture industry in Nakuru County, where specialized skills are required in various stages of flower cultivation and export. Given the highly technical nature of floriculture work, such as grafting, pest management, and post-harvest care, retaining experienced employees is crucial for maintaining product quality and consistency (Kariuki, Wandiga & Odiyo, 2022). Floriculture firms in Nakuru County face significant challenges related to employee retention, as losing skilled workers not only affects productivity but also incurs additional costs related to recruitment, training, and on boarding (Chepngeno, Wasike & Mote, 2019). Therefore, professional development practices are seen as essential for ensuring the retention of skilled staff in this sector.

Employees who perceive opportunities for growth within their organizations are more likely to remain loyal, reducing the likelihood of seeking employment elsewhere (Samuel & Chipunza, 2019). When organizations in Nakuru's

floriculture sector invest in professional development, they enhance job satisfaction and commitment, leading to improved employee retention. This is particularly important in an industry where consistency and expertise are key drivers of success. By offering clear paths for career advancement, floriculture firms can foster loyalty and reduce turnover, ensuring they retain the specialized knowledge and skills needed to remain competitive in the international market (Muriuki et al., 2023).

In addition to benefiting employee retention, professional development contributes to overall organizational performance. A skilled and knowledgeable workforce not only enhances operational efficiency but also drives innovation, allowing firms to respond to market changes and evolving customer demands more effectively (Prudnikov, Lektorova & Dmitrieva, 2021). For floriculture firms in Nakuru County, this means that investing in employee training and development can lead to better product quality, higher yields, and improved international competitiveness, all while reducing the costs associated with high turnover rates (Onyiego & Osoro, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

Although employee retention is a critical issue for organizations across various industries, the floriculture industry in Kenya has been particularly affected by high employee turnover rates, which significantly impact operational efficiency and financial sustainability. According to a study by the Kenya Flower Council, the average annual employee turnover rate in the floriculture industry stands at 30%, reflecting a pressing challenge for firms in this sector (Chemirmir, Musebe & Nassiuma, 2018). Additionally, the Kenya Institute of Human Resource Management found that the average length of service for an employee in the floriculture industry is only 18 months (Lagat, 2018). This high turnover rate creates several problems for floriculture firms, including elevated recruitment and training costs, and reduced productivity as new employees take time to reach optimal performance (Kumi & Elbers, 2022). Firms with high turnover often struggle to maintain productivity levels comparable to those with lower turnover rates (Kwambai, 2018).

Given these challenges, this study aimed to investigate the effect of professional development practices on employee retention among floriculture firms in Nakuru County. Professional development practices, including mentoring, coaching, and skills training, are essential strategies that can enhance employee satisfaction and commitment, thus reducing turnover. By focusing on these practices, floriculture firms can retain valuable talent, minimize the costs associated with high turnover, and improve their overall productivity and competitiveness. Understanding the impact of these practices is crucial for developing effective retention strategies tailored to the specific needs of the floriculture industry in Nakuru County.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this research was to establish the effect of professional development practices on employee retention among floriculture firms in Nakuru County.

Literature Review

Oladimeji and Sowemimo (2020) conducted a study aiming to study the extent to which mentoring has affected employee job performance in the Nigerian service sector. The population included of Guest Services Staff of Park Inn by Radisson and Green Legacy Resort totalling 460 from which the sample size of 250 was drawn using the Taro Yamane sample determination formula and the quota sampling technique. The study confirmed that mentoring functions influence the performance of employees in the Nigeria' s service sector.

Mchete and Shayo (2020) explored the role played by induction training on the performance of new employees at workplace, using selected staff from the Open University of Tanzania as respondents. The study further examined how the induction training offered to the new employees facilitates theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge and integration at workplace. It concluded that induction training was of great value as it served to inform new staff of the important aspects of their new working environment. The study recommended that for the university to have an effective orientation training the top management should provide enough support and allocate a reasonable and realistic budget. In addition, there should be a continuous follow-up to get feedback from the trainees, and that sufficient time should be allocated for orientation training to allow the program to cover all aspects.

Onyemaechi (2019) examined the effect of Mentoring Practice on employee' s Performance using Abia State University Uturu, Nigeria as a case study. The researcher used structured questionnaires to elicit information from the sample size of 199 lecturers from the rank of Graduate-Assistant to Lecturer 1 in the University. The study findings indicated a

positive relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth of junior lecturers. It also decried the fact that mentoring seemed to occur by happenstance as opposed to a more structured mentoring programme.

Fernando and Dissanayake (2019) examined the effect of job rotation practices on Employee Job Performance, using Sri Lankan Private Commercial Banks. The study collected primary data from questionnaires from 100 employees of the four largest banks in Sri Lanka, were selected from each bank by using convenience sampling technique. Findings derived from the study were that there is a strong positive relationship between job rotation and employees job performance in private commercial banks in Sri Lanka. The researchers extol job rotation as an important programme for allowing employees to acquire new skills, enhance staff productivity, develop new relationships across the company and gain skills needed for future career advancement and its impact on the employee job performances.

A study exploring the influence of mentorship practices on employee performance in small manufacturing firms in Garissa County, Kenya was conducted by Cheron, Towett and Njeje (2016). This study was carried out in manufacturing firms located in Garissa County and adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The study established a significant relationship between leadership mentorship, innovative mentorship, knowledge transfers mentorship, talent development mentorship and the performance of the employees.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Expectancy Theory, which posits that employees are motivated to remain in an organization when they believe that their efforts will lead to desired performance and, in turn, result in meaningful rewards. According to Vroom (1964), employees assess the likelihood that their effort will lead to performance (expectancy), the belief that performance will lead to a reward (instrumentality), and the value of the reward (valence). In the context of this study, professional development practices can enhance employees' expectancy by providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform better. When employees see that their development leads to improved performance and career growth, they are more likely to stay with the organization, as they expect continued personal and professional advancement. By fostering a clear path for growth through professional development initiatives, floriculture firms can motivate employees to stay, reducing turnover.

This study also relied on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation in influencing employee behavior and retention. Developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), SDT argues that employees are more likely to remain with an organization when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. Professional development practices contribute to satisfying these needs by enhancing employees' sense of competence through skill development and learning opportunities. When employees feel competent, valued, and connected to their roles, they are more intrinsically motivated to stay within the organization. In floriculture firms, creating a supportive environment that nurtures personal growth through mentoring, coaching, and job rotation can help satisfy these intrinsic needs, resulting in higher retention rates and greater employee loyalty.

Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by the following conceptual framework that shows diagrammatized representation of the relationship between the variables.

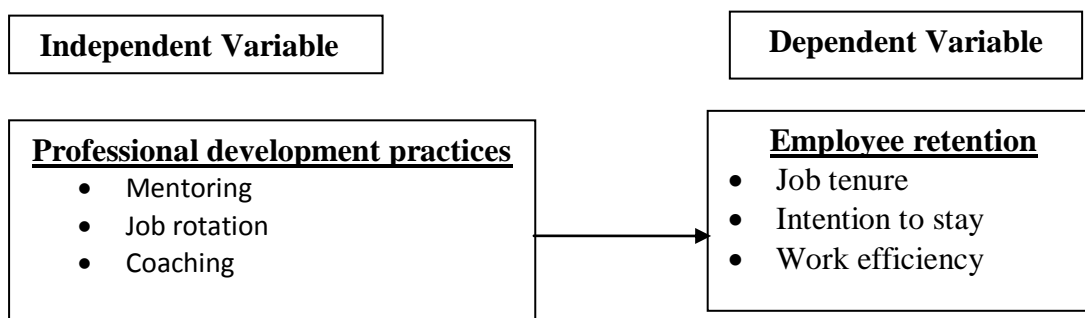


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

II. Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the effect of professional development practices on employee retention in floriculture firms in Nakuru County. The study targeted a population of 55 floriculture firms, selecting one employee from each firm, resulting in a total sample size of 55 respondents. A census technique was used,

ensuring that every floriculture firm was represented in the study. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires administered via Google Forms, and the responses were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Both descriptive statistics (such as means and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (correlation and multiple regression analysis) were used to assess the relationships between the variables. The regression model helped determine the strength and significance of the relationship between professional development practices and employee retention. The following empirical model was adopted.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y = Employee retention

β_0 = Constant term

β_i = Beta coefficient of variable i measuring change Y to change in i

X_1 = Professional development practices

III. Results of the Study

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive results in Table 1 indicate that respondents generally had positive perceptions of the professional development practices in their floriculture firms. The highest-rated aspects were related to coaching and job rotation, with respondents expressing strong satisfaction with the coaching they received (mean = 4.63) and its ability to improve performance. Additionally, satisfaction with the job rotation program (mean = 4.26) and the fairness of job rotations (mean = 3.87) also received high ratings, suggesting that these practices were well-regarded by employees. Satisfaction with mentoring also scored well, with respondents expressing approval of the mentoring they received (mean = 4.37).

However, there was some variability in the effectiveness of the mentoring and matching programs, with slightly lower mean scores for the existence of a formal mentoring program (mean = 3.59) and the effectiveness of mentor-mentee matching (mean = 3.60). The overall mean score for professional development practices was 4.04, indicating that, on average, employees viewed the firm's professional development efforts favorably. While there is room for improvement in areas like mentor matching and expanding job rotation programs, the high satisfaction with coaching, mentoring, and job rotation demonstrates that these practices play an important role in fostering employee growth and retention.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Professional Development Practices

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Dev
I have a mentor whom I look upto	47	3.92	0.91
There is a mentoring programme in the organization	47	3.59	1.00
The matching of mentors to mentees is effective	47	3.60	1.05
I am satisfied with the mentoring that I receive	47	4.37	0.83
I have rotated across different roles in the firm	47	4.35	0.89
There is a job rotation programme in the firm	47	3.76	1.24
I am satisfied with the job rotation in the firm	47	4.26	0.82
The job rotation that happens at the firm is fair	47	3.87	0.94
I get regular coaching about my performance	47	3.65	0.93
Coaching is encouraged at the firm	47	3.93	0.59
The coaching I receive helps me to improve my performance	47	4.63	0.56

I am satisfied with the coaching methodology used in the firm	47	4.57	0.62
Overall mean Score	47	4.04	0.92

Correlation Analysis

The correlation between professional development practices and employee retention, as shown in Table 2, reveals a strong positive relationship with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.832, which is significant at the 0.01 level (p = 0.000). This indicates that higher levels of professional development practices are associated with higher levels of employee retention within floriculture firms in Nakuru County.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix for Professional Development Practices and Employee Retention

		Employee retention
Professional development practices	Pearson Correlation	.832**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

Regression Analysis

The regression results for professional development practices and employee retention, as shown in Table 3, indicate an R Square value of 0.692. This means that 69.2% of the variance in employee retention can be explained by professional development practices.

Table 3: Model Fitness for Professional Development Practices and Employee Retention

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.832 ^a	.692	.686	.458833856189135

a. Predictors: (Constant), Professional development practices

The ANOVA results in Table 4 further confirm the significance of the regression model. The F-statistic is 101.327, with a corresponding p-value (Sig.) of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 threshold for significance. This indicates that the model is statistically significant, meaning that professional development practices significantly impact employee retention.

Table 4: ANOVA Results for Professional Development Practices and Employee Retention

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.332	1	21.332	101.327	.000 ^b
	Residual	9.474	45	.211		
	Total	30.806	46			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee retention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Professional development practices

Table 5 provides detailed insights into the contribution of professional development practices to employee retention. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for professional development practices is 0.887, indicating that for every unit increase in professional development practices, employee retention increases by approximately 0.887 units, holding other factors constant.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients for Professional Development Practices and Employee Retention

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.380	.346		1.097	.278
	Professional development practices	.887	.088	.832	10.066	.000

Summary of Findings

Descriptive statistics revealed that respondents generally perceived professional development practices positively, with an overall mean score of 4.04 and a standard deviation of 0.92, indicating a substantial agreement on the importance of these practices. Correlation analysis further supported these findings, showing a strong positive relationship between professional development practices and employee retention, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.832 ($p = 0.000$), indicating that as professional development practices improve, employee retention increases significantly. The regression analysis results reinforced the significance of professional development practices on employee retention. The model summary indicated an R Square value of 0.692, meaning that 69.2% of the variance in employee retention could be explained by professional development practices.

IV. Conclusions

The study concluded that professional development practices have a significant positive effect on employee retention in floriculture firms in Nakuru County. The findings demonstrated that well-structured and effectively implemented professional development initiatives, such as mentoring, job rotation, and coaching, play a crucial role in enhancing employees' commitment to their organizations. Employees who perceive these practices as beneficial are more likely to stay with their employers, as these practices not only improve their skills and career prospects but also increase their job satisfaction and engagement.

Recommendations

It is recommended that floriculture firms invest more in professional development practices. These practices, such as mentoring programs, job rotation, and regular coaching sessions, should be structured and well-implemented to ensure that employees perceive them as beneficial. By offering clear pathways for career advancement and skill development, firms can increase employee satisfaction and commitment, thereby reducing turnover.

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