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The Influence of Employee Development Initiatives in the Retention of Academics at Kyambogo University, Uganda

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Abstract

*The study analysed the influence of employee development (ED) initiatives on the retention of academics at Kyambogo University (KYU) in Uganda. The issue of concern was that whereas KYU was investing up to 18% of her annual budget into staff hiring and development activities, the contribution of these ED activities or initiatives towards the retention of academics was not known. Hence, the study's overall objective was to assess the influence of ED initiatives on the retention of academics at KYU. The study,, borrowing ideas from the job embeddedness theory, explains how staff retention at KYU is partly a question of being embedded in the university employment system and partly due to other factors. The study adopted an explanatory survey design that employed quantitative data collection and analysis approaches. Stratified sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 159 from a study population of 311 academics. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. The study registered a response rate of 68.2% (107 out of 157). The data were analysed using SPSS Version 25 and presented as descriptive and inferential statistics. The key findings from the study revealed that ED had a significant positive correlation with academic retention ($r = 0.489^{**}$, $n = 107$, $p = 0.000$). It was also established that ED is a significant predictor of retention of academics at KYU ($F = 33.010$, $p < 0.01$). Up to*



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23.2 per cent of the variance in the retention of academics at the university could be attributed to ED initiatives. It was concluded that if ED initiatives were effectively implemented, there would be a likelihood of improving retention levels of academics. The study recommends that the administration of KYU maintains the existing ED initiatives and strengthens them further to attain a high level of retention of academics. The study further recommends maintaining and improving the existing practices of ED, such as mentoring, coaching, lectures, workshops and conferences.

Keywords: *Employee Development, Training, Academic Staff Retention, Kyambogo University*

Introduction

The influence of Employee Development (ED) initiatives on the retention of academics in universities is unclear. While some scholars (e.g. Nyanjom, 2013; Ofobruku & Nwakoby, 2015; Nyamori, 2015; & Sapling, n.d.) argue that development initiatives help to retain staff, others such as Bergiel et al. (2009) posit that training or ED do not embed employees in their jobs, hence do not lead to their retention. In this article, we discuss the influence of ED initiatives on retention of academics at Kyambogo University (KYU) in Uganda.

Failure to retain quality academic staff has remained a major area of concern among many institutions of higher learning (Selesho & Naile, 2014). This concern is prevalent because highly talented academic staff are being taken away by the non-teaching sectors that provide better remuneration packages than institutions of higher learning (Erasmus et al., 2015). Meanwhile, the issue of employee retention has gained prominence in contemporary academic research and its evolution has been a gradual process (Milner, 2015). According to Osei et al. (2016), early efforts geared towards retaining workers can be traced as far back as the 1920s in the United States of America. The employee retention phenomenon evolved progressively over the subsequent decades, consequently compelling human resource practitioners and scholars to develop and implement various frameworks geared towards retaining talented employees both in the private and public sectors. One of the most significant outcome frameworks was the emphasis on ED.

Academic staff retention poses one of the greatest challenges to universities (Ssali et al., 2019). In Uganda, it has been reported that shortages of academic staff in universities were mainly due to brain drain that started in the 1970s and the early 1980s owing to heightened civil strife and economic downturn (Nabawanuka, 2011). The civil strife and economic downturn adversely affected the education sector to the extent that by 1986, only one out of 50 academic staff had a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree. To date, the effects are evident and Uganda's higher education system still largely depends on the Western World for PhD training (Bisaso, 2018). Basically, the low retention of academics is unhealthy for the smooth running of a university since it affects the quality of teaching, research and innovation at the University. Therefore, a critical analysis into this phenomenon became critical at this material time.

Context of the study

KYU was instituted from three separate educational institutions. It was created in line with the provisions of the *Universities and Other Tertiary Institution Act (2001)*. The three institutions that later formed the university were: Uganda Polytechnic Kyambogo; Institute of Teacher Education; and Uganda National Institute of Special Education (Kyambogo University, 2019). KYU, is the second largest Public University in Uganda, located in Kampala City and became operational in 2003. As at December 2019, the University had 355 fulltime academic staff, with a student population of about 33,000. In terms of qualifications, the University had 112 (32%) academic staff with Bachelor's Degrees, 182 (51%) with Master's Degrees and 61 (17%) with Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Degrees (Kyambogo University, 2019). Of the 355 fulltime academics, 44 were involved in academic administration as deans or heads of department, while 311 staff were purely engaged in teaching. The different categories of academics at KYU were: Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Professor.

In a bid to effectively advance and promote knowledge and development of skills in science, technology and education, KYU has for about a decade put in place strategies for ED which have been widely implemented over the last six years. For instance, during the financial years 2013/14 to 2017/18 (a 4-year period), 139 academics enrolled for further studies and were facilitated by KYU to undertake PhD courses in various academic disciplines in universities within East Africa and the rest of the world. By December, 2018, a total of 87 academics had completed their PhD degrees (Kyambogo University, 2019). However, despite these efforts, some academic staff continued to leave KYU. For instance, an average of eight per cent of the academics at the level of PhD quit the University in the period 2014 to 2018. Meanwhile, the majority (about 92% academics) stayed and worked at KYU. Much as evidence on the causes of turnover of academics at KYU is readily available, hardly any scholarly research exists on the extent to which ED initiatives have influenced the retention of academics at the university.

The dilemma

In order for a university to effectively execute their cardinal role of teaching, research and innovation, retention of academic staff becomes critical (Ssali et al., 2019). Therefore, KYU implemented a number of strategies aimed at ensuring that she retains her academic staff. Since 2013, the university has invested significant amounts of resources in supporting ED initiatives. For instance, in 2018 the university invested up to 18% of her annual budget into staff hiring, training and development (Auditor General Report, 2018) both at campus and off-campus. These investments were, inter alia, geared towards improving the level of employee engagement and productivity among staff in a bid to increase their retention at the university (Kyambogo University, 2019). While, scholars (e.g. Hassan et al., 2013) argue that staff training and development initiatives increase (staff) retention in an organization, others such as Bergiel et al. (2009) attest that training or ED does not lead to staff retention. Therefore, as KYU continued to invest in ED initiatives which, among other things, were intended enhance staff retention, there was need to examine these efforts with the view of determining their contribution to retention of academics. To this end, the study sought to answer one major

question, namely: To what extent do ED initiatives influence the retention of academics at KYU?

Literature review

Theoretical review

The study used the *job embeddedness construct* to analyse retention. The job embeddedness construct was propounded by Mitchell, et al. in 2001. It postulates that employee intentions to leave or stay in an organization depend on the individuals' link to other people, teams and groups; perception of their fit with their job, organization and community; and what they think they have to sacrifice if they quit their job (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2001). In addition, the aspects of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and individuals' perception of job alternatives determine the intention of an employee to quit or stay in an organization (Ghosh & Gurnathan, 2015) but these interplay with job embeddedness to determine one's retention. Therefore, when an employee experiences overall job dissatisfaction chances of being retained reduce. If this dissatisfaction coincides with alternative job opportunities elsewhere that appear to be more appealing, the probability for retention of such an employee further reduces. But, when an employee is more embedded within his organization, he is less likely to quit.

The job embeddedness construct or theory was deemed relevant to this study because it provides a potential guide for interpreting and understanding how ED initiatives influence the intentions of academics to stay at KYU. In effect, the focus of analysis was on the extent to which ED initiatives can contribute in the equation of the determinants of staff retention as already indicated. By implication, given that KYU has implemented a number of ED initiatives with a view of, *inter alia*, retaining academics, job embeddedness construct guided our understanding of ED in determining the academics' intention to stay.

Retention of staff in an organization

Employee retention is a process through which organizations encourage employees to remain working for the organization for the maximum period of time or until the completion of the project, hence employees do not quit their jobs (Barik & Kochar, 2017; Chiradeep, 2020). Employee retention denotes an organisation's ability to deter employee turnover (Carucci, 2021). According to Reditt *et al.* (2020), employees' intention to stay is the main consideration for any entity to become a desired employer among its competitors.

Employee retention initiatives involve a set of policies and practices which encourage employees to stay put in an organization for a longer period of time (Juneja, 2015). On the academic front, Bushe (2012) describes retention as the ability of an institution to not only employ qualified academic staff, but also retain competent staff through a well-established retention framework. Actually, the aspect of retaining employees is an important goal for most organizations. It is also possible that the more time an employee spends in an organization, the more experienced the employee gets and becomes more valuable to the organization. Hence, it becomes important for an organization to retain her employees.

According to Kyndt et al. (2009), the key of the indicators of employee retention include a sense of belonging, unwillingness to leave and long service. In addition, employees with a high sense of belonging demonstrate commitment to the organization, identify strongly with the organization, and value the sense of membership within it. Accordingly, such employees tend to agree with the objectives and value systems of the organization, and are thus likely to remain in it. Actually, long service and unwillingness to leave are, among others, influenced by the organization's norms and practices, especially the organizational climate. Organizations such as universities are constantly looking for ways and means of retaining academic staff using strategies such as rewards, working environment, and ED initiatives.

Employee development initiatives

Employee development can be described as “the growth or realisation of a person’s ability and potential through the provision of learning and educational experiences” (Armstrong & Taylor, 2016, p. 284). It is about making employees participate in coaching, mentoring, delegation, lectures, conferences and workshops. It is also argued that ED focuses more on the learner than on the learning per se and that ED also pays attention to life planning and intellectual curiosity (Cole, 2002). According to Robbins & Coulter (2013), ED interventions focus on future jobs in the organization plus individual skills and abilities. Hence, ED initiatives shift from specific job (training) and specific discipline (education) to a person’s career interest and wellbeing.

ED initiatives and activities are meant to improve performance on the present job of the individual, impart new skills for new job or new position in the future and general growth for both individuals and organization and retain staff so as to be able to meet the organization’s objectives (Hassan *et al.*, 2013). Hassan et al. also state that there are broadly two different approaches that an organization may choose from for training and developing skills of her employees. These are on-the-job training given to organizational employees while conducting their regular work at the same working venues; and off-the-job training that involves taking employees away from their usual work environments and then train them. In this study, ED was broadly understood to entail practices from both on-job-training (coaching, mentoring, and delegation) and off-job-training (lectures, conferences, and workshops) initiatives geared towards retaining academics in the university. The concern was on the contribution of ED initiatives and how these practices influence retention of academics in KYU in Uganda.

It has been noted that the factors that drive the need for ED in institutions of higher learning include: increased competition among higher education institutions; need to address future leadership; recruitment and retention challenges institutions face; changes in demographics and external labour markets; and skills shortage (McCartney & Worman, 2013). The two scholars further argue that ED leads to reduction of recruitment costs as staff turnover is reduced; effective knowledge management and transfer; delivering of cutting-edge services and products; creation of competitive advantage; reducing enterprise risk; improved client retention; and maintenance of adequate staff capacity. Therefore, the need for more effective ED strategies in universities cannot be over-emphasized.

Employee development initiatives and retention of staff

Employee development activities are systematic efforts by organizations to maintain and improve the quality of their workforce (Duah & Danso, 2017). ED initiatives seem to have a close link with retention of staff in an organization. According to Villegas (cited in Hassan, et al., 2013), the development initiatives help organizations to increase employee retention while decreasing turnover. For example, as Alal & Floran (2021) observe, the implementation of on-job-training programmes assumes a critical role in fostering employee retention and loyalty. When employees perceive a genuine investment in their personal development from their organization, they develop a tendency to remain associated with the organization over the long haul. By implication, when employees are involved in training and development, they feel that the organization is interested in them and want to develop their career and this increases their willingness to stay. Essentially, ED initiatives have a direct relationship with retention. And, as already indicated, ED initiatives include coaching, mentoring, delegation, job rotation, placements, lectures to staff, participating in conferences and workshops.

Coaching: It has been noted that, “coaching is a personal (usually one-to-one) approach that enables people to develop their skills and knowledge and improve their performance” (Armstrong & Taylor, 2016, p. 619). Actually, “coaching is primarily focused on performance within the current job and emphasises the development of skills” (Clutterbuck, 2004, p.23). Coaching is usually provided by specialists in given disciplines who focus on competence development and motivation or behaviour on an individual employee.

Coaching enhances morale, commitment and improving productivity among employees (Muriithi, 2016; Pousa & Mathieu, 2014; and Utrilla et al., 2015). Similarly, according to Greene (2012), institutions that inculcate a coaching culture across all levels are poised to have the potential of moving their entire workforce towards peak performance. Meanwhile, a study in Kenya established that career development and employee training are significant determinants of employee retention in state-owned corporations (Nyanjom, 2013). Similarly, Greene (2012) asserts that effective one-to-one coaching impacts employee retention and their performance. In addition, related scholarly work by Ldama and Bazza (2015) concluded that staff retention in commercial banks is encouraged when ED is used as a motivational strategy.

Mentoring: Mentoring is considered to be, “a method of helping people to learn, as distinct from coaching, which can be relatively directive means of increasing people’s competence” (Armstrong & Taylor, 2016, p. 620). Through mentoring, people receive benefits such as advice on self-development, guidance on how to learn, information on the way things are done, and specific skills. As indicated by scholars (e.g. Mundia & Iravo, 2014; Nyamori, 2015; and Ofobruku & Nwakoby, 2015), mentorship programmes influence employee performance and mentorship programmes are very vital in developing and retaining employees. Whereas the scholars above highlight the key role of mentoring in employee performance, the role of mentoring as a predictor of staff retention has apparently been given little attention in regard to academics in universities.

Delegation: Delegation refers to the actions by which a leader assigns part of his or her

authority commensurate with the assigned task to a subordinate (Lutgans & Hodgetts 2014). Basically, it is a process of distributing tasks and authority in an organization. Delegation is one of the components of ED. Delegation is linked to improved productivity among employees (Hashim et al., 2013). This is because employees feel valued when responsibility and authority is vested upon them. Such positive feelings among employees increase their willingness to stay in an organisation.

Kinsambwe and Kauma (2018) examined the perceived effect of delegation on employee performance at Stanbic Bank Uganda Ltd, Mbale Branch. Their findings revealed that there was a reduced number of shortages and absenteeism among employees as a result of delegation. They also established that employee delegation contributed to customer care and timeliness in service delivery which led to decreased complaints from clients towards the services offered to them. This scenario in turn increased job satisfaction and enhanced staff retention at the Bank.

Workshops: A workshop is a brief intensive course involving a small group of people, aimed at imparting problem-solving skills (Stone, 2010). Stone notes that training workshops, study tours and formal certificate courses can create significant impact on employee efficiency, productivity and quality of work output. He further observes that workshops offer effective, low-cost methods for raising the performance of a wide variety of employees within an organization. However, Billington et al. (2009) argue that much as workshops are valued for the [mental] space they create to reflect on practice, knowing whether and how workshops lead to retention of staff in organizations remains a subject of discussion. In this study, workshops are some of the composite measures of ED and are jointly analysed with other approaches to (employee) development under this subsection.

Lectures: Lectures are regarded as traditional verbal direct instructions and presentations, targeting a large audience (Raheja, 2015). This type of off-the-job training is commonly used in institutions of higher learning. However, according to Raheja (2015), several other non-teaching institutions have adopted this approach for imparting knowledge and skills to employees. Whereas available literature credits the lecture method of ED for its direct influence on the employee's performance (Afurobi et al., 2015), limited literature exists on its influence on retention of staff, particularly in universities.

Conferences: Conferences seem to be related to level-of-job engagement and psychological meaningfulness of employees. Attending a conference or training session aids employee engagement, and it helps them feel like they belong to a team (Carucci, 2018), which in turn could generate positive feelings, hence increasing the chances of employee retention. Besides, as Doyle (2015) explains, the conference attendance facilitates high networking value and strengthens team building in the profession which are antecedents to employee retention.

In a nutshell, while there are substantial scholarly researches indicating positive influence of ED on retention, they have tended to focus on commercial corporations that are profit-oriented (Jacobs, 2015). Literature showing the extent to which ED influences retention, especially in institutions of higher learning in Uganda is scarce (Nassazi, 2015). Yet, by knowing the effects of ED on retention, institutions of higher learning (e.g. a university) would

be able to enhance their retention levels (Umer, 2013). Given the centrality of universities in an economy, it became imperative to analyse the ED factors that predict employees' intentions to stay at KYU. To this end a hypothesis, namely: "*Employee development initiatives have a significant influence on the level of the retention of academics*" was developed from literature to further guide the study.

Methods and population

The study was quantitative in nature and it employed an explanatory cross-sectional survey design. The study focused on the academic staff of KYU, specifically on matters of their retention. According to the Kyambogo University Annual report (2019), there were 311 academics (Assistant Lecturers, Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Associate Professors and Professors) who were not deans or heads of department or employed in any form of administration. Out of these, 159 members were selected using stratified sampling techniques. Of the 159 selected respondents, a total of 107 participated in the study by completing the questionnaires.

Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. The questionnaires consisted of close-ended questions that collected standardized responses on ED initiatives and retention of academics at KYU. Data from the completed questionnaires were captured in a computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. Thereafter, the data were analysed to generate both descriptive and inferential statistics. The inferential statistics were presented using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient to measure association between ED and retention of academics at KYU.

On ethics, permission was obtained from KYU administration to allow us collect data. Furthermore, with guidance from the human resource manager of the university, we sought audience with and clearance from the heads of department to access the academic staff. Two administrative assistants from the university were enlisted to aid in administering questionnaires to the respondents and collecting the required data. Other key ethical aspects considered were: informed consent where the participants were told that the study was voluntary; anonymity and confidentiality where we concealed details of participants such as names and identity during the data management processes; and protection from harm by giving liberty and freedom to respondents to skip questions that they felt would harm them emotionally and or psychologically. After handling the ethical considerations, the collected data were analysed and interpreted.

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

A total of 107 out of the 159 targeted academics completed the self-administered questionnaires, giving a response rate of 67.3%. This response rate was deemed sufficient because, as Fincham (2008) observes, response rates approximating 60% for most research should be the goal of researchers to enable generalization of the results to the target population. Of the 107 who completed and returned the questionnaires, the majority (57%) were male, while 46 (43%) were female. About half of the respondents, 54 (50.0%) were Assistant Lecturers, 43 (41%) were Lecturers, 10 (9%) of them were Senior Lecturers.

Retention of Academics at KYU

The state of retention of academics at KYU was investigated with the aid of 12 items (indicators) developed from the independent variable (retention) and scored on a five-point Likert Scale, viz.: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Not Sure (NS), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Mean scores were generated and the following intervals were used: 1.0 – 2.0 = SD; 2.1 – 2.9 = D; 3.0 = NS; 3.1 – 4.0 = A; and 4.1 – 5.0 = SA. These items yielded different scores that were indicative of the perceived retention levels of academics at KYU. For instance, the item: “I love the organizational culture of KYU” had the highest mean score of 4.08; with low variations in the responses (std. = 0.848). This finding means that academics love the organizational culture of KYU, depicting a high level of a sense of belonging that is likely to positively influence the rate of retention of academics. In terms of score ranking, this item was followed by, “I am available for classes whenever timetabled and on time” with a mean of score 4.01 and std. = 0.694). The scores on this item reveal that academics of KYU in most cases are available for classes when timetabled. This suggests a sense of commitment and unwillingness to leave. And then, on the item, “I find pleasure in supervising students’ research work” the score was equally high (mean = 4.00) with a low standard deviation of 0.659. These two scores suggest that, on average, academics at KYU found pleasure in supervising students’ research work. Finding pleasure in one’s work might imply willingness to stay on the same job.

We also asked respondents whether or not they had intentions to quit KYU in the following one year. This aspect generated mixed responses with 49 (45.8%) agreeing they had intentions to quit KYU the following year, 46 (43.0%) of them disagreed, and 12 (11.2%) could not tell. On average, respondents agreed (mean = 2.99), with minimal variations in the responses (std. = 1.137). These findings suggest that whereas the big portion (45.8%) of academics at KYU had intentions of quitting the university in the following year, a significant number (43.0%) had no intentions to quit. This intention to quit (45.8%) suggests employee retention problems which could partly explain why there is a turnover rate of eight per cent (for those who succeeded) as already indicated.

Furthermore, 46 (43%) of the respondents revealed that their colleagues were preoccupied with looking for other jobs elsewhere, 39 (36.4%) of them stated otherwise, and 22 (20.6%) were not sure. This points to the fact that on average, respondents somewhat agreed (mean = 3.06), with low variation of responses (std. = 0.970). This finding further shows that much as they are some academic staff at KYU who are preoccupied with looking for alternative jobs elsewhere, almost an equal number of them are not concerned with looking for alternative employment. This points to some fair job satisfaction levels or low job embeddedness, which have a bearing on the rate of retention of academics at the university.

Overall, a mean score of 3.61 and standard deviation of 0.902 were attained on all items of retention combined. These overall average scores suggest that the academics of KYU were likely to be retained by the university. This finding notwithstanding, there was need to analyse and explain the influence of ED initiatives on retention of academics at KYU. To achieve this objective; first, a correlation analysis was done and second, a regression analysis was also

performed to determine the extent of influence.

Employee development initiatives and retention of academic staff at KYU

In order to ascertain the nature and strength of the influence of ED initiatives on retention of academics at KYU, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient was computed. In addition, this analysis was done to determine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between ED and retention of academics. The results from the analysis are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Correlation between ED and retention of academics

		Employee Development	Retention of Academics
Employee Development	Pearson Correlation	1	.489**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	107	107
Retention of Academics	Pearson Correlation	.489**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	107	107

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

Results in Table 1 show a positive but moderate correlation between ED initiatives and academic retention at KYU ($r = +0.489$, $n = 107$). The correlation is statistically significant (p -value = 0.000, $n = 107$), implying that improvements in ED initiatives positively influence academic retention at KYU. Additionally, since the study established a statistically significant correlation between ED and academic retention ($r = 0.489^{**}$, $n = 107$, $p = 0.000$), regression analysis was carried out to determine the extent of the influence of ED initiatives on academic retention. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Regression between ED and retention of academics at KYU

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
	.489 ^a	.239	.232	.35757		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Development						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.221	1	4.221	33.010	.000 ^b
	Residual	13.425	105	.128		
	Total	17.646	106			
a. Dependent Variable: Retention of Academics						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Development						

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.081	.257		8.087	.000
	Employee Development	.427	.074	.489	5.745	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Retention of Academics

(n = 106)

In Table 2, the model summary findings show that ED is a predictor of retention of academics at KYU ($F = 33.010$, $p < 0.01$). The regression coefficient results (Beta=0.849, $p < 0.01$) imply that ED is a significant predictor of retention of academics at KYU. Besides, the adjusted R Square = .232, $p < 0.01$, shows that ED explains 23.2 per cent of the variation in retention of academics at KYU. This statistic further suggests that 23.2 per cent variation in the retention of academics is associated with the changes in the ED initiatives such as coaching, mentoring, delegation, workshops, lectures, and conferences. The remaining 76.2 per cent can be attributed to other factors that are not analysed in this study. For instance, as Korantwi-Barimuh (2017) notes, other key factors that can influence the retention of academics include organizational culture and values, self-actualization, work-life balance, rewards, and recognition. And, in the view of Nyanjom (2013), retention is essentially influenced by factors such as compensation, job characteristics, supervisor support and promotion opportunities.

Given that the results in Table 2 further reveal that ED has a statistical significant positive influence on academics, then the study hypothesis which stated, “*employee development initiatives have a significant influence on the level of the retention of academics*” was accepted. Causation was implied between the two variables in which ED was noted to have a significant positive influence on retention of academics ($B=0.849$). This statistic further suggests that once ED is improved and systematically managed, retention of academics at KYU improves. In other words, when there are improvements in ED initiatives such as seminars, workshops, delegation, and lectures, there will be a likelihood of attaining a high level of a sense of belonging, unwillingness to leave, and long service among academics, which implies high retention levels. In effect, ED initiatives at KYU embed staff in that university.

Discussion of Results

This study examined the influence of ED on retention of academics at KYU, Uganda. The findings revealed a moderately positive and statistically significant relationship between ED and retention of academics ($r = 0.489^{**}$, $n = 107$, $p = 0.000$). Furthermore, through regression analysis, the study found out that 23.2 per cent of the total variation in retention of academics can be explained by ED. This implies that if ED initiatives that include seminars, workshops, delegation, and lectures are effectively done, they contribute up to 23.2% total variation in retention levels of academics at KYU. These revelations are in a way supported by work of Abdullahi et al. (2018) who point out that in a competitive economy, ED plays a crucial role

in gaining competitive advantage, and that ED activities improve the quality of organizational workforce. Moreover, in the view of Half (2021), training and development enhance staff retention. And, according to Abdullahi *et al.* (2018), ED has a significant and positive effect on academic employee's productivity and retention. In effect, employee productivity enhances internal satisfaction and increases staff retention.

The study findings, *inter alia*, revealed that ED initiatives (e.g. coaching, mentoring and delegation) are effective approaches to skills improvement at KYU and in turn enhance staff retention. These results are supported by earlier findings of Muriithi (2016), Pousa & Mathieu (2014), and Utrilla *et al.* (2015), who attested that coaching enhances morale and commitment among employees which in turn improves retention of staff. Other results that posted related messages include Nyanjom (2013) who found out that career development and ED were significant determinants of employee retention in state owned corporations in Kenya, and that effective one-on-one coaching influences employee retention and their performance.

In this study, mentoring was found to be one of the important aspects of ED that contribute to retaining academics at KYU. This finding is in agreement with research publications by Mundia and Iravo (2014), Ofobruku & Nwakoby (2015), and Nyamori (2015) who concluded that mentorships had significant relationship with employee performance, and that mentorship programmes are very vital in developing employees, as well as strategic tools for attracting and retaining talented employees. Actually, Muriithi (2016) recommends that organizations utilize the mentoring function as a human resource development tool because it improves the employee's knowledge, skills and abilities as well leading to the realization of career goals and objectives. Given the positive benefits of mentoring, it can also be argued mentoring contributes to the retention of staff in an organisation such as KYU.

In regard to delegation, as part of ED initiatives, the current study findings are consistent with earlier findings of Hashim *et al.* (2013) that link delegation to improved productivity among employees. Hashim *et al.* further observe that delegation makes employees feel valued when responsibility and authority are vested upon them. Moreover, in the view of Kinsambwe & Kauma (2018), delegation reduces the number of shortages and absenteeism among employees.

Workshops were rated highly by staff at KYU, revealing that they contribute value to the academic community. In line with these findings, Stone (2010) states that workshops can create significant impact on employee efficiency, productivity and quality of work output. However, Billington *et al.* (2009) argue that training workshops are a waste of taxpayers' money in public organizations. The argument of Billington *et al.* is inconsistent with the study findings where workshops were found to be a positive contributor to retention of academics.

Lectures and Conferences were found to be significant contributors of job satisfaction and engagement of academics at KYU. The analysis suggested that lectures and conferences were valuable in staff retention. These findings are in line with what Aguinis & Kraiger (2016) contend that external events such as conferences tend to offer additional knowledge about the industry that goes beyond the participants' normal job specifications and company briefings.

Additionally, attending a conference or training session aids employee engagement, and it helps them feel like they belong to a team (Carucci, 2018), which in turn could generate positive feelings and a sense of belonging thereby increasing staff retention. Moreover, Doyle (2015) lists the benefits of conference attendance such as high networking value, strengthening team building, enhancing current and future prospects in the profession, which are all precursors to employee retention.

From the perspectives of the job embeddedness construct, as articulated by Mitchell et al. (2001), we can argue that the key three concerns of the construct, namely: links, fit, and sacrifice, can be related to this study. The fact that up to 43.0 per cent of the academics at KYU had no intentions of leaving their jobs could imply that they are in a way embedded in the university employment. For example, their decision to stay seems to be a result of finding themselves fitting into the university systems than anywhere else; and as they pursue their careers at KYU, leaving the university could imply a lot of sacrifice as their jobs get disrupted. Hence, the job embeddedness construct provides a framework for understanding employee retention.

Conclusions of the study

As already indicated, the overall mean score on retention was 3.61 and standard deviation of 0.902 was attained on all items of staff retention at KYU. This implies that although some other items of retention were rated poorly (e.g. working environment and working conditions), most items were rated highly showing positive bias towards the level of engagement, satisfaction of staff and a sense of belonging. This points to fair satisfaction levels at KYU, which have a bearing on the rate of retention of academics at KYU. By implication, staff in an organization can be retained even when certain factors such as working environment and conditions are average for as long as other work enablers (e.g. ED initiatives) are catered for.

The study revealed that ED initiatives that involve coaching, mentoring, delegation, workshops, lectures and conferences have a significant positive influence on retention ($B = 0.849$) of academics in KYU. Hence, there is causation between ED and retention of academics. Hence, it can be concluded that as more improvements are made in ED initiatives for academics, more improvements in their retention are realised in a university. Using the data presented in this study, it can further be concluded that ED initiatives contribute to academics' unwillingness to leave a university. By implication, a university can depend on ED initiatives (up to 23.2%) to retain her academics. Academics feel respected and cared for whenever they are enrolled by their university in ED initiatives. The results from the analysis of primary data in the discussion subsections indicate that the overall potential for staff retention at KYU through ED initiatives is high. The results further reveal how much ED initiatives have contributed (23.2%) to staff retention. It can be concluded that while ED initiatives influence retention of academics, they are not a panacea to staff retention, but they are simply a part of the solution to retention.

Recommendations

In light of the study conclusions, we make recommendations on ED and retention of academics at KYU. Since ED initiatives significantly influence retention of academics, the administration of KYU and probably other universities should maintain the ED practices such as mentoring, coaching, delegation, lectures, workshops and conferences with the view of enhancing the retention of academics. And, as Anvay (2022) advises, it is important for organisations to offer the requisite resources encompassing financial support, time allocations, and logistical facilitation to enable employees' participation in ED programmes.

In addition, the contribution of ED initiatives to academics was 23.2 per cent, leaving other factors with the remaining 76.8 per cent. Hence, we recommend that KYU analyses other potential retention factors (e.g. work environment, compensation, job characteristics, supervisor support, and promotion) and improves on them alongside the ED initiatives. In other words, universities need to explore a wide terrain of retention factors (beyond ED) that they can institute in order to keep academics in their jobs.

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