

Effect of Selected Human Resource Management Practices on Employee Engagement among Employees in Nakuru County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

Employees are the most valuable assets of any organisation, and their level of engagement greatly determines overall performance. The main objective was to investigate the effect of selected human resource management practices on employee engagement. Specifically, the study sought to establish the effect of leadership styles, compensation and benefits, work environment and internal communication on employee engagement in Nakuru County. A descriptive cross-sectional design was adopted with a sample of 375 respondents who were derived using a formula by Israel, from a target population of 5,910 County employees. Data was collected using closed-ended questionnaires. Pearsons Correlations analysis and regression analysis were used to test the study hypotheses at 5% (0.05) significance level. The results of correlations analysis showed that the selected human resource management practices (leadership styles, compensation and benefits, work environment and internal communication) had significant positive correlations with employee engagement ($p < 0.05$). The results of hypotheses testing using simple regression analyses found that leadership styles, compensation and benefits, work environment and internal communication had significant positive effect on employee engagement ($p < 0.05$). Finally, Hypothesis Five found that selected HRM practices jointly, had significant effect on employee engagement ($F = 76.410$, $p = 0.000$) with leadership styles and compensation and benefits being the strongest positive predictors of employee engagement, work environment being a significant negative predictor while internal communication was an insignificant predictor of employee engagement. The study recommended that, the County leadership should be supportive and participative, provide fair and competitive compensation and benefits, provide pleasant and safe work environment and adopt two-way communication systems that allow employees to contribute to decision-making. Future research should include other HRM variables such as training, organizational culture, employee development and performance appraisal, adopt longitudinal research designs to assess long-term effects, and apply qualitative methods or triangulation to minimize self-reporting bias.

Key words: Employee engagement, County, leadership styles, compensation and benefits, work environment, internal communication

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In the dynamic global business environment, sound human resource management (HRM) has become a foundation for organizational success (Susantinah and Krishernawan, 2023). Human Resource Management (HRM) has received immense attention from both practitioners and scholars in the last two decades. At the outset, workers were viewed as merchandise but are now regarded as an organization's valued assets and hence organizations are increasingly acknowledging that their employees are not just workers but invaluable assets whose engagement directly influences efficiency, advancement, and return on investment (Herdiansyah, 2023; Kassa and Tsigu, 2022). Enhanced levels of employee engagement lead to reduced turnover rates, boosted customer satisfaction, and upgraded financial performance (Parmentas, 2022). According to Nakuru County Public Service Board Sub-Sector (2023), low performance levels recorded by the County have been attributed to poor communication of and weak implementation of human resource policies and regulations due to human resources constraints, slow adaptation of policies due to employee incompetency, capacity gaps in human resources, lack of customer and employee satisfaction, budgetary constraints caused by lack of funds and lack of adequate facilities. All these challenges are attributed to lack of appropriate employee engagement including, lack of proper leadership, poor compensation, poor communication strategies and ineffective working environment. Sugianingrat (2019) explained that, for human resources to aid an organization achieve its goals and objectives, employee engagement is one of the crucial employee management practices that has to be employed.

Harris (2018) stated that, organisations in the United States of America showed higher results as a result of employee engagement because employees had morale, increased retention, efficiency and effectiveness in the organizations. In Malaysia, Othman, Rapi, Alias, Jahya, and Loon (2019), concluded that, employee engagement is undoubtedly crucial not only for organizations but for individuals as well and further stated that organizations in the business world and academia are able to understand the factors that affect employee engagement and its measures; organizations experience low absenteeism, high retention rates and team spirit which leads to boosted performance in the organizations. Chatiza, Mubvundu and Chisango (2021), stated that, an improvement in employee engagement results in improved service delivery in organizations in Zimbabwe. Sendawula, Kimuli, Juma and Muganga (2019), reported that employee engagement is one of the key factors that contributes to increased employee performance which bring about increased organizational performance in Uganda. In Kenya, Muathe (2020), concluded that, HRM Practices affect employee turnover intentions and thus the practices need to be optimized to enhance retention.

Statement of the Problem

Organizations with high levels of employee engagement surpass their competitors in profitability, customer satisfaction, creativity, employees who are dedicated, efficient, exceed expectation and further that, enhanced employee engagement directly contribute to improved organizational performance due to employee retention thus reducing costs, higher job satisfaction, increased customer satisfaction and loyalty giving rise to boosted levels of productivity, competitive advantage and overall achievement (Mansor, Jusoh, Hashim, Muhammad and Omar 2023). HRM practices significantly influence employee engagement (Jose *et al.*, 2022). The HRM factors that contribute to employee engagement, include clear communication, compensation and benefits, employee development opportunities, a conducive work environment, and a feeling of purpose and meaning in work performance (Hayday *et al.*, 2021; Kahn, 2022; Saks, 2020). Otachi (2019), concluded that, improved internal communication, effective compensation, motivation and empowerment

influence employee engagement which in turn boosts organizational productivity. According to Chumba (2020), low employee engagement amongst public hospital nurses is the main cause of low performance. Kamau, Muathe and Wainaina (2020) attribute low performance and turnover in public learning institutions to low level of employee engagement. Chatiza, Mubvundu and Chisango (2021), indicated that lack of employee engagement was a result of lack of motivation, poor remuneration, lack of job security, lack of recognition and appreciation, lack of empowerment, poor communication, unclear and undefined roles, poor relationship with organizational leaders, as well as poor leadership styles. According to Nakuru County Annual Progress Report (2019), the County is faced with challenges such as poor leadership, employee incompetency, budget allocation constraints, human resource constraints, lack of employee growth and recognition, communication gaps between employees and departments, weak implementation of policies and regulations, corruption and lack of transparency leading to most objectives of the County remaining unachieved.

Kavyashree Kulenur, Nagesh and Nanjundesharaswanny (2022) studied the relationship between HRM Practices and Employee Engagement among employees in the IT sector in India. Alam, Islam and Chowdhury (2024) studied Human resource management practices and employee engagement among employees in the textile industry in Bangladesh. Similarly, Goyal, Nigam & Goyal (2023), studied the effect of HRM practices on employee engagement among employees in the IT sector in India. Kamau, Muathe, and Wainaina, (2020), studied HRM Practices, Employee Engagement and Teachers Turnover Intentions among Public Secondary Schools in Kenya. Odhiambo (2022) studied the effect of human resources practices on employee engagement among employees in international development agencies and focused on UNDP, Gigiri branch, Nairobi. John and Bula (2023) studied the effect of HRM Practices on employee performance among employees at the Kenya Reinsurance Corporation in Nairobi City. These studies focused on the IT sector, textile industry, public schools, UNDP and a different dependent variable, employee performance. No studies have been conducted in Nakuru County and there is no evidence of any study that has integrated the four selected HRM practices of this study (Leadership styles, Compensation and Benefits, Work environment and Internal communication) and employee engagement in Counties in Kenya. To fill this gap, this study sought to at investigate the effect of selected human resource management practices on employee engagement at the Nakuru County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section focuses on reviewing available literature on the variables of this study namely: Employee engagement and selected human resource management practices.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is the unwavering dedication and participation that employees have towards their work, peers and the organization as a whole (Guo & Hou, 2022). Smith (2022) defines employee engagement as a human resources concept that describes the level of enthusiasm and dedication workers feel toward their job, the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, their commitment to the organization, and the willingness to put discretionary effort into their work. Gallup (2023) defines employee engagement as the degree of involvement, interest, and dedication of employees to both their job and the place of work. Lifsa and Amah (2026) state that even though many people describe engagement as a synonym to concepts like job satisfaction, motivation and organizational commitment, engagement is different as it refers to a work-oriented cognitive state that is active and has a direct impact on how people behave and perform at work adding that, engagement is not only about the emotions of the employees, but also about the action of the employees, as per the emotions.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), developed the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The study adopted Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) that has been commonly and widely used as a measure of engagement. The scale measures engagement from the three dimensions, vigour, dedication and absorption, which are believed to be valid, reliable and have been used in several past studies. Gwamanda, Mahembe and Jano (2024) did research on the scale and concluded that, based on the item and dimensional analyses output, which indicate the scales' reliability, it can be inferred that the UWES meets the minimum requirements for usage in other settings. Heveri, Novak, Solcova and Tavel (2025) stated that, because higher employee engagement is linked to lower turnover, the availability of a validated measurement tool is especially valuable; UWES can be used because it would provide a deeper understanding of and form a basis for creating targeted actions to enhance employee engagement, competitive advantage for employers and quality of life for employees.

Human Resource Management Practices

Effective HRM practices are essential for enhancing employee satisfaction, which in turn enhances employee performance, organizational commitment and retention (Subedi and Bajracharya 2024). Human resource management practices are defined as a system implemented by the organization to attract, develop, motivate and retain employees with the aim of ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the organizational goals (Nor *et al.*, 2020). HRM practices such as flexible work arrangements, job autonomy, and transparent communication can promote knowledge sharing, cordial work environments, and creativity which are critical in ensuring that employees are motivated to contribute new ideas and solutions which will in the end encourage employees to work in ways that support their creativity and work-life balance, leading to enhanced engagement levels (Nhien and Nguyen 2025). HRM practices including employee involvement in decision-making, performance-based pay, employee development and team-based work structures are particularly effective in creating a sense of ownership and accountability among employees, which boosts their engagement and job satisfaction (Kossyva *et al.*, 2024).

Relationship between Selected HRM Practices and Employee Engagement

Various studies have found that human resource management practices have significant relationships with employee engagement. Pham (2021) found that human resource management practices (including empowerment practices, capability development, fair remuneration and rewards, information-sharing practices, and recognition practices) had significant positive effect on work engagement among health care workers in Vietnam. Kavyashree, Kulenur, Nagesh and Nanjundeshwaraswamy (2022) found that human resource management practices had significant positive effect on employee engagement among employees in India. Goyal, Nigam & Goyal (2023) found that human resource management practices (recruitment and selection, continuous training and development opportunities, competitive rewards, career advancement and employee involvement) had significant effect on employee engagement. Yerdaw and Berhanu (2026) found that job characteristics, reward and recognition, work environment, growth opportunities, and leadership quality had significant positive effect on employee engagement among employees of the Ethiopian's house of peoples' representative's office. Oluwatayo and Adetoro (2020) found that HRM practices namely, rewards and compensation, performance appraisal, and employee involvement were significant positive predictors of employee engagement. Acharya and Anoor (2021) found that growth opportunities, compensation, regular communication, teamwork, independence, leadership, co-worker relationship, the job itself and recognition had significant positive influence on employee engagement. Saks (2022) found that job design, training and development, flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, participation in decision making, health and safety, career development, and

health and wellness programmes had significant positive effect on employee engagement. Ma'arof, Rashid and Nasuredin (2023) found that HRM practices, namely career development, employee participation, and training and development, had strong positive impact on employee engagement among nurses in public hospitals in Malaysia. Nhien and Nguyen (2025) reported that HRM practices namely, participation, development, and compensation, boosts employee engagement and performance. Alam, Ullah, Islam and Chowdhury (2024) found that recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, training and development, supervisory role and compensation had significant positive influence on employee engagement among employees in the manufacturing sector in Bangladesh. The selected human resources management practices in this study that were hypothesized to influence employee engagement included Leadership Styles, Compensation and Benefits, Work Environment and Internal Communication.

Leadership Styles and Employee Engagement

Leadership styles can be defined as the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people; a leadership style is thus a crucial factor for improving employee engagement and organizational efficiency Shrivastava and Mathur (2025). Sana, Ming, Hanandes and Kask (2024) investigated leadership styles and employee engagement and the study results revealed that transformational and transactional leadership styles significantly impact employee engagement, Laissez-faire style, characterized by minimal intervention and full autonomy for employees, exhibits the weakest impact. Therefore, it is paramount for organizations to put in place suitable leadership styles to boost employee engagement and performance. Majrashi (2022) studied the impact of leadership styles on employee engagement among Government agencies employees in Tabuk City in Saudi Arabia. The study found that transformational and transactional leadership had significant positive effect on employee engagement. Rusilowati, Bangun and Bennet (2025) carried out a study on the effect of leadership styles on employee engagement and organizational growth. The study found that transformational, transactional and servant leadership had significant positive effect on employee engagement. Maundu, Namusonge and Simiyu (2020) studied the effect of transactional leadership style on employee engagement among teachers in public secondary school teachers in Murang'a County. The study found that transactional leadership had significant positive effect on employee engagement. Sana, Ming, Hernandez and Kask (2024) found that transformational and transactional leadership styles had significant positive effect on employee engagement. Jillo and Muchelule (2023) studied the influence of leadership styles on employee engagement in Marsabit County Kenya. The results of correlation and regression analysis found that transformational leadership had significant positive effect on employee engagement while transactional leadership had significant negative effect on employee engagement. Yondonrenchin, Zanabazar and Baljinnyam (2023), studied the impact of leadership styles on employee loyalty and engagement among employees in insurance firms in Mongolia. The study found that transformational and transactional leadership had significant positive effect on employee engagement and employee loyalty. Southgate, Aderibigbe, Balogun and Mahembe (2023) studied the effect of leadership styles on employee engagement at a selected tertiary institution in Cape Town, South Africa. The study found that transformational, transactional and servant leadership had significant positive effect on employee engagement.

Compensation and Benefits and Employee Engagement

According to Dessler (2014,), compensation is what is received by employees as an exchange for their services and contribution to the organization in the form of money or any other reward that may include salaries, wages, bonuses, incentives and other benefits such as health benefits, holiday allowance, meal allowance, leave allowance and all forms of pay going to employees and arising from their employment, besides their regular wages or salaries. Compensation is a crucial component for any company aiming to enhance its employees'

performance and motivation; the recognition and reward given to employees in financial or non-financial facets for achieving organizational goals Cakrawardan, Putra & Arif (2020). Onikoyi, Adeyemi, Omoyele and Odeh (2025) described compensation as money or earnings that an employee receives from an employer as a wage, variable income, recognition, and employee security. Mwingirwa, Okello, Otinga and Kitonga (2024) studied the effect of compensation system on employee engagement among employees in Fairtrade Horticultural Firms in Kenya. The study found that compensation systems had significant positive effect on employee engagement. This implies that employee engagement enhanced when employees were satisfied with their compensations and rewards. Nikisi, Masha and Bwowe (2024) studied the effects of compensation benefits on employee engagement for Private Family Business Schools in Eastern Cape, South Africa. The results found that compensation and benefits had significant effect on employee engagement. Yaqub, Hussain, Mahmood and Farooq (2021) examined the link between compensation, employee engagement, employee loyalty and organizational performance among employees in banks in Pakistan. The study found that compensation practices had significant effect on employee engagement. Owusu, Esther, Ebenezer and Kyei (2023) examined the effect of fringe benefits and remuneration on employee engagement among employees in Ghana. The study revealed that fringe benefits and remuneration had a positive effect on employee engagement. Compensation is therefore an important factor that influences how and why people select to work in a particular organisation in comparison to another.

Work Environment and Employee Engagement

Work environment represents everything that surrounds the employee in the workplace, has the potential to affect performance of their work and it involves external and internal environments which can influence their willingness, productivity levels; there is a strong link between workers' productivity and the physical workplace environment in that, the physical workplace has a significant impact on employees' productivity, happiness, social interactions, and wellbeing (Roskams and Haynes 2021). Yusliza *et al.*, (2020) revealed that supportive work environment and retention are related to work environment. A conducive and inclusive environment makes employees feel free and independent thereby enhancing employee engagement since, in the present world, employees are looking for a welcoming workplace environment that enable employees participation in organization decision-making (Yerdaw and Berhanu, 2026). Simanjuntak, Suhud and Susita (2023) investigated the relationships between work environment and employee engagement mediated by job satisfaction among employees in Indonesia. The study found that work environment had significant positive effect on employee engagement and job satisfaction. Judeh (2021) investigated the effect of work environment on employee engagement and the mediating role of ethical decision-making among employees in transportation corporations in Jordan. The study found that work environment had significant positive effect on employee engagement and ethical decision making. Positive work environments increase employees' motivation, support, and sense of belonging, all of which raise engagement levels. Employees are less likely to look for job elsewhere and are more likely to remain loyal to their company when they feel appreciated and content with their working conditions. On the other hand, a bad work environment can result in lower job satisfaction, which in turn can lead to lower engagement and increased turnover rates. Companies that put a high priority on developing a positive and stimulating work environment can improve job satisfaction, which raises employee engagement and retention.

Suyoto and Murtiharso (2019) found out that the work environment has significant positive effect on employee engagement among Public Relations Staff in Luxury Hotels in Jakarta, Indonesia. Nderitu and Ndeto (2019) studied that influence of workplace environment on employee productivity in Nairobi City County. The study found that physical environment had a significant positive effect on employee productivity resulting in enhanced employee engagement. Kamanja, Ogolla and Gichunge (2019) carried out a study on the influence of

work environment on employee engagement among employees in Central Government Ministries in Meru County, Kenya. The study found that physical, psychological and social work environment had significant positive effect on employee engagement.

Internal Communication and Employee Engagement

Sharma *et al.*, (2025) describes internal communication as the lifeblood of any industrial setting that serves as the source of information flow collaboration, safety and progress. Open, clear and transparent internal communication is crucial in today's complex environment that is comprised of complicated machinery, heterogeneous teams, and sophisticated operations; communication ensures that workers know their duties, the organization's mission and hazards involved to be remedied in good time. They conclude that, effective internal communication is the bedrock of organizational success, affecting employee engagement. Brown & Johnson (2021) investigated the impact of internal communication strategies on employee engagement in the banking sector. The study found that clear and consistent communication from leadership, opportunities for feedback, and recognition of employee contributions were positively associated with employee engagement in the banking sector. Kimani (2024) conducted a study on internal communication strategies and employee engagement and concluded that, effective internal communication strategies play a pivotal role in enhancing employee engagement and that open downward and upward communication, plus the use of multiple clear communication channels lead to boosted levels of employee engagement. Lauren (2022) conducted a study on internal communication and employee engagement strategies among employees in Finnish Public Relations. The study found that transparent internal communication positively influenced employee engagement. This implies that organizations that practice open, honest, and frequent communication tend to have more engaged employees. Mbhele and de Beer (2021) found that internal communication had significant positive effect on employee engagement. Specifically, the study found that supportive communication climate, quality of information and two-way communication positively influenced employee engagement. Sharma, Hitanath and Sharma (2025) examined the role of internal communication in fostering employee engagement, retention, and organizational commitment among employees in Bhutanese Industries. The study found that internal communication had significant positive correlation with employee engagement. This implies that regular, clear, and approachable internal communication from managers enhances employee's interests and engagement in their work. Lalić, Milic' and Stanković (2020) studied the effect of internal communication on employee engagement as the key prerequisites of Happiness among employees in Serbia. The study found that internal communication satisfaction increases employee engagement, which in turn increases employee happiness. Dhanesh and Picherit-Duthler (2021) studied the antecedents of employee engagement during remote work in a crisis among employees in UAE. The study found that two-way communication and internal crisis communication content positively influenced employee engagement.

Research Hypotheses

From the above reviewed literature, the following research hypotheses were proposed:

H₀₁: Leadership styles do not have significant effect on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County

H₀₂: Compensation and benefits do not have significant effect on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County.

H₀₃: Work Environment does not have significant effect on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County.

H₀₄: Internal communication does not have significant effect on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County.

H₀₅: Selected human resource management practices (leadership styles, compensation and benefits, work environment and internal communication) jointly do not have significant effect on employee engagement in Nakuru County.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population of this study consisted of 5910 employees working in all 11 sub-counties of Nakuru County. The study derived a sample of 375 respondents using formula by Israel (1992). Stratified random sampling was used to determine the sample size from each sub-county and thereafter simple random sampling was used to select the respondents from each of the sub-county. Questionnaires were distributed through ‘drop and pick’ method. A total of 304 questionnaires were filled out, giving a response rate of 81% which is excellent. Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) stated that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting; a rate of 60% is good, while a response rate of 70% and above is excellent. The descriptive statistics of the respondents’ demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	127	41.8
	Male	177	58.2
Marital Status	Married	201	65.8
	Single	103	34.2
Age	Below 25 Years	20	6.6
	25-34 Years	64	21.1
	35-44 Years	119	39.1
	45-54 Years	65	21.4
	55 years and Above	36	11.8
Level of Education	Basic Education	2	0.7
	Certificate Level	16	5.3
	Diploma Level	97	31.9
	Undergraduate Degree	141	46.4
	Postgraduate Degree	48	15.7
Years worked in the County	Less than 5 Years	23	7.6
	5 - 10 Years	94	30.9
	11 - 15 Years	117	38.5
	16 Years and above	70	23
Tenure in the Current position	Below 1 Year	30	9.9
	1 - 5 Years	73	24
	6 - 10 Years	145	47.7
	11 Years and Above	56	18.4
Level of Management	Senior Management	48	15.8

	Middle level Management	205	67.4
	Support staff Level	51	16.8

Following extensive review of the literature, the questionnaire to collect data for the study was developed and measured on a 5-point likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, where 1 indicates Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Uncertain, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree. The reliability of the study instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha test and the results showed acceptable reliability coefficients as follows: Employee engagement ($\alpha = 0.810$), Leadership style ($\alpha = 0.834$), Compensation and Benefit ($\alpha = 0.897$), Work Environment ($\alpha = 0.889$) and Internal Communication ($\alpha = 0.809$). The employees' demographic characteristics are as follows: gender, marital status, age, level of education, Years worked in the County, tenure in the current position and level in management.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The testing of the study hypotheses was subjected to statistical analysis as shown below. Pearson Correlation analysis was carried out to test the relationships between selected human resources management practices and employee engagement. Hypothesis One to Four was tested using simple regression analysis while Hypothesis Five was tested using multiple regression analysis.

Results of Pearson Correlation analysis

The study utilized Pearson's correlation analysis to establish the direction and strength of the relationships between selected human resources management practices (leadership style, compensations and benefits, work environment and internal communication) and employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County. According to Field (2005) correlation coefficients which are ≤ 0.35 are regarded to represent weak or low relationships, 0.36 to 0.67 was moderate relationships, 0.68 to 0.90 was high or strong relationships while r coefficients > 0.90 being very high relationships. The results of Pearsons Correlation Analysis are shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 2: Results of Correlation Analysis between Selected Human Resources Management and Employee Engagement

Variable	Leadership Style	Compensation & Benefits	Work Environment	Internal Communication	Employee Engagement
Leadership Style	1	.575**	.463**	.200**	.623**
Compensation & Benefits	.575**	1	.541**	.346**	.625**
Work Environment	.463**	.541**	1	.404**	.313**
Internal Communication	.200**	.346**	.404**	1	.178**
Employee Engagement	.623**	.625**	.313**	.178**	1

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

The results of the correlation analysis in Table 4.12 shows that there was a moderate significant positive relationship between leadership style and employee engagement of employees in Nakuru County ($r = 0.623$, $p =$

0.000). This implies that employee engagement enhanced when county employees were satisfied with their supervisors' leadership styles. The correlation analysis results shows that compensation and benefits had moderate significant positive relationship with employee engagement ($r = 0.625$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that employee satisfaction with their compensation and benefits positively enhances employee engagement. Work environment had weak significant positive relationship with employee engagement ($r = 0.313$, $p = 0.000$) which implies that employee engagement enhances when employees work in favourable environment. Finally, the results of the correlation analysis showed that internal communication had weak significant positive relationship with employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County ($r = 0.178$, $p = 0.002$). This implies that employee satisfaction with internal communication positively improves employee engagement.

Results of Regression Analyses

This section presents results for hypothesis testing using Regression analyses. Hypotheses One to Four were tested using simple regression analysis while Hypothesis five was tested using multiple regression analysis. Regression analyses were conducted to establish the effect of selected HRM practices on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County as shown below.

H₀₁: Leadership styles do not have a significant effect on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County

Hypothesis One sought to establish the effect of leadership styles on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County.

Table 3: Results of Simple Regression Analysis determining the effect of Leadership styles and Employee Engagement

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
1	.625 ^a	0.388	0.386	191.269	.000 ^b
a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership style					
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement					

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.174	0.261		0.665	0.507
	Leadership Style	1.035	0.075	0.623	13.830	0.000
a. Dependent Variable						

The model summary of the regression results presented in Table 3 indicate that leadership style accounted for 38.8% of the variance in employee engagement among the employees in Nakuru County (R Square = 0.388). This means that 61.2% of the variance in employee engagement was explained by other variables not included in

this study. The ANOVA results showed that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 191.269$, $p = 0.000$), meaning that leadership style was a significant positive predictor of employee engagement. The standardized beta coefficient shows that leadership style was a strong positive predictor of employee engagement ($\beta = 0.623$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that employee engagement enhanced when employees were satisfied with their managers leadership style. On the other hand, dissatisfaction with leadership style was likely to negatively influence employee engagement. Thus, the null hypothesis stating that leadership style does not have a significant effect on employee engagement was rejected.

H02: Compensation and benefits do not have significant effect on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County

Hypothesis Two sought to determine the effect of Compensation and Benefits on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County.

Table 4: Results of Simple Regression Analysis determining the effect of Compensation and Benefits on Employee Engagement

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
1	.625 ^a	.391	.389	194.073	.000 ^b
a. Predictors: (Constant), Compensation and Benefits					
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement					

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.706	.150		11.362	.000
	Compensation and Benefits	.575	.041	.625	13.931	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement						

The model summary of the regression results in Table 4 indicates that compensation and benefits accounted for 39.1% of the variance in employee engagement in Nakuru County (R Square = 0.391). This means that 60.9% of the variance in employee engagement was explained by other factors not included in the model. The ANOVA results showed that the regression model was significant ($F = 194.073$, $p = 0.000$) which suggests that compensation and benefits have significant positive effect on employee engagement. The standardized beta coefficient shows that compensation and benefits was a significant positive predictor of employee engagement ($\beta = 0.625$, $p = 0.000$). This means that employees who were satisfied with their compensations and benefits were likely to be more engaged in their work, while those who were dissatisfied with their compensation and benefits reported lower levels of engagement. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that compensation and benefits do not have significant effect on employee engagement in Nakuru County was rejected.

H03: Work Environment does not have significant effect on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County

Hypothesis Three sought to determine the effect of work environment on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County

Table 5: Results of Simple Regression Analysis determining the effect of work environment on Employee Engagement

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
1	.313 ^a	.098	.095	32.703	.000 ^b
a. Predictors: (Constant), Work Environment					
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement					

Coefficients ^a					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	2.231	.271		.000
	Work Environment	.406	.071	.313	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement					

The model summary of the regression results in Table 5 indicates that work environment accounted for 9.8% of the variance in employee engagement (R Square = 0.098). This means that 90.2% of the variance in employee engagement was explained by other variables not included in this study. The ANOVA results showed that the regression model was statistically significant (F -value = 32.703, p = 0.000) which shows that work environment positively influenced employee engagement. The standardized beta coefficient shows that work environment was a significant positive predictor of employee engagement (β = 0.313, p = 0.000). This implies that employees who work in a supportive, clean and comfortable environment are more engaged in their tasks, while those who work in poorly managed or unaccommodating workspaces tend to exhibit lower engagement. Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that work environment does not have a significant effect on employee engagement was rejected.

H₀₄: Internal communication does not have significant effect on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County

Hypothesis Four sought to establish the effect of internal communication on employee engagement among employees Nakuru County

Table 6: Results of Simple Regression Analysis determining the effect of internal communication on Employee Engagement

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
1	.178 ^a	.032	.029	9.928	.002 ^b

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement
b. Predictors: (Constant), Internal Communication

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.934	.267		10.980	.000
	Internal Communication	.216	.069	.178	3.151	.002
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement						

The model summary of the regression results in Table 6 indicates that internal communication accounted for 3.2% of the variance in employee engagement among the employees in Nakuru County ($R^2 = 0.032$). This means that 96.8% of the variance in employee engagement was contributed by other factors not included in the study. The ANOVA results showed that the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 9.928$, $p = 0.002$) which indicates that internal communication was a significant predictor of employee engagement. The standardized beta coefficient shows that internal communication was a statistically significant positive predictor of employee engagement ($\beta = 0.178$, $p = 0.002$). This implies that employees who were satisfied with internal communication reported higher levels of engagement, while those who were dissatisfied with internal communication reported low engagement levels. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that internal communication does not have a significant effect on employee engagement was rejected.

H₀₅: Selected human resource management practices (leadership styles, compensation and benefits, work environment and internal communication) jointly do not have significant effect on employee engagement in Nakuru County

Hypothesis Five sought to establish the joint effect of selected human resource management practices (leadership styles, compensation and benefits, work environment and internal communication) on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County

Table 7: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis determining the effect of Selected Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Engagement

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
1	.711 ^a	0.505	0.499	76.41	.000 ^b
a. Predictors: (Constant), Internal Communication, Leadership Style, Work Environment, Compensation and Benefits					
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement					

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.507	.291		1.745	.082
	Leadership Style	.699	.085	.421	8.237	.000
	Compensation and Benefits	.418	.050	.454	8.325	.000
	Work Environment	-.159	.067	-.122	-2.370	.018
	Internal Communication	-.016	.055	-.014	-.300	.764
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement						

The model summary of the regression results in Table 7 shows that selected human resource management practices (leadership style, compensation and benefits, work environment and internal communication) jointly explained 50.5% of the variance in employee engagement (R-square value = 0.505). This means that 49.5% of the variance in employee engagement was explained by factors not in the study. The ANOVA results shows that the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 76.410$, $p = 0.000$) which means that selected HRM practices (leadership style, compensation and benefits, work environment and internal communication) jointly had significant effect on employee engagement among employees in Nakuru County. Therefore, the null hypothesis that stated the selected HRM practices jointly do not have influence on employee engagement was rejected.

The standardized beta coefficients show that compensation and benefits ($\beta = 0.454$, $p = 0.000$) and leadership style ($\beta = 0.421$, $p = 0.000$) were significant positive predictors of employee engagement. This implies that organizations that emphasize fair compensation systems and offer supportive, participative leadership tend to report higher levels of employee engagement. In contrast, work environment was a statistically significant negative predictor of employee engagement ($\beta = -0.122$, $p = 0.018$). This implies that some aspects of the physical or psychological work environment such as noise, poor safety standards, or unclear job roles may undermine employee engagement. Finally, the standardised beta coefficients showed that internal communication was an insignificant predictor of employee engagement ($\beta = -0.014$, $p = 0.764$). This suggests that communication practices, while important for other HR outcomes, did not directly influence employee engagement at Nakuru County or may be overshadowed by other dominant factors like leadership styles and pay.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The main objective of the study was to determine the effect of selected human resource management practices on employee engagement among employees at the Nakuru County . The study findings are discussed below.

Leadership Style: The results of correlation and simple regression analysis showed that leadership style was a significant positive predictor of employee engagement. This implies that supportive, inclusive, and participatory leadership style encourages higher levels of engagement, while poor leadership styles like autocratic leadership is likely to result in disengagement. Consistent with this study, Breevaart and Bakker (2018) found that transformational leadership significantly improves employee engagement levels by enhancing motivation, autonomy, and purpose. Ishaque, Liaquat, Irshad and Khakwani (2022) found that

participative leadership showed a positive relationship with employee engagement among hotel industry workers in Pakistan. Jillo and Muchelule (2023) found that transformational leadership had significant positive effect on employee engagement while transactional leadership had significant negative effect on employee engagement in Marsabit County government.

Compensation and Benefits: The results of correlation and regression analysis found that compensation and benefits had significant positive influence on employee engagement. This implies that satisfactory, fair compensation and benefits positively enhance employee engagement. Consistent with this study, Kim and Kang (2022), found that competitive compensation systems significantly enhance employee motivation and engagement across public institutions. Similarly, a study by Ali and Anwar (2023) in the private sector revealed that employees who perceived fairness in their remuneration were more emotionally invested in their job roles and organisational outcomes. Mwingirwa *et al.* (2024) found that compensation systems had significant positive effect on employee engagement in Fairtrade Horticultural Firms in Kenya.

Work environment: The results of correlation and regression analysis found the work environment was a significant positive predictor of employee engagement. This implies that employee engagement enhances when employees work in favourable environment. Consistent with this study, Simanjuntak *et al.* (2023) found that work environment had significant positive effect on employee engagement in Indonesia. Rasool, Wang, Tang, Saeed and Iqbal (2021) found that toxic work environment had significant negative effect on employee engagement among employees in small and medium-size enterprises in China. Similarly, Kamanja, Ogolla and Gichunge (2019) found that physical, psychological and social work environment had significant positive effect on employee engagement. Ndirangu (2019) also found that physical work environment had significant positive effect on employee engagement at L'Oreal East Africa.

Internal communication: The results of correlation and regression analysis found that employee satisfaction with internal communication positively improved employee engagement. This implies that employee engagement enhances when employees are informed and involved in the decision-making processes. Consistent with this study, Nguyen and Ha (2023) found that internal communication had significant positive effect on job engagement among employees in higher education institutions in Vietnam. Similarly, Sharma *et al.* (2025) found that regular, clear, and credible internal communication from managers had significant positive effect on employee engagement. Dhanesh and Picherit-Duthler (2021) found that two-way communication and internal crisis communication content had significant positive effect on employee engagement employees in UAE.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of correlation and regression analysis found that selected human resource management practices (leadership style, compensation and benefits, work environment and internal communication) had significant positive effect on employee engagement. In this regard, the study concludes that employee engagement enhances when county leaders were supportive and participative, when employees are satisfied with their compensations and benefits, work environment and two-way internal communication. The results of multiple regression analysis on the joint effect of selected human resource management practices on employee engagement found that leadership style, compensation and benefits and work environment were significant predictors of employee engagement while internal communication had insignificant effect on employee engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings indicate that selected human resources management practices (leadership style, compensation and benefits, work environment and internal communication) influenced employee engagement in Nakuru County. The study recommends that, Nakuru county managers should adopt supportive, participative and transformational leadership styles that involves employees in decision making and respects employee autonomy and encourage problem-solving. In addition, leadership programmes should be structured to equip managers with skills that foster trust, accountability, and engagement. Leaders are encouraged to act as role models, provide consistent feedback, and align their decisions with organisational values to sustain employee engagement. Secondly, the study recommends that Nakuru County should review and improve its compensation and benefits system to enhance fairness, competitiveness, and transparency. Pay structures should be benchmarked against similar organizations to address concerns about uncompetitive salaries. Performance-based reward systems should be introduced to recognize and motivate outstanding contributions, while career development opportunities and non-monetary recognitions such as public acknowledgment should be strengthened. By linking rewards to performance and employee value, the County can boost morale, loyalty, and long-term employee engagement. Thirdly, the study recommends that the County should enhance both physical and psychological aspects of the work environment. The study advocates that the County should focus on the creation and provision of a positive workplace environment so as to improve the task performance of the employees. Office layouts and infrastructure should be redesigned to support efficiency, comfort, and modern work needs. At the same time, policies should address perceptions of inequality and ensure fair treatment of all employees regardless of their position. Initiatives such as employee wellness programs, diversity and inclusion policies, and work-life balance support should be implemented to create a healthier and more inclusive work environment that sustains engagement. Finally, the study recommends that managers at Nakuru County should establish more inclusive and consistent communication systems. Clear structures should be created to ensure that important updates reach all employees on time and without distortion. Beyond one-way updates, communication should allow employees to contribute feedback and participate in decisions that directly affect them. Supervisors and managers should be trained in two-way communication process so as to foster openness, transparency, and trust. Proactive communication practices should also be adopted so that employees are informed of changes early enough so as to reduce resistance and uncertainty.

Limitations of the study

This study faced the following limitations. Firstly, the study used self-administered questionnaires to collect data which means that information collected was likely to be biased as it depends on the participants' perception and emotions at the time of filling the questionnaire. Secondly, the study was based on cross-sectional research design which means that data was collected at one point in time. This means that the study was unable to determine the long-term effect of the selected HRM practices on employee engagement. Therefore, future studies may use longitudinal research design to determine the long-term effect of selected HRM practices on employee engagement. Lastly, the study was carried out among employees in one (1) County out of 47 Counties in Kenya. This means that the study findings were generalised to other Counties with caution. Future studies can be carried out in other counties in Kenya.

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