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## The Influence of Feature-Oriented Framework on Employee's Commitment in Migori County Government, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*Purpose: The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of psychological contract on employees' commitment. The objective was to establish the influence of feature-oriented framework on employee's commitment in Migori County Government. Test hypothesis was that there is no significant influence of feature-oriented framework on employee commitment.*

**Keywords:** Psychological Contract, Employee commitment, feature-oriented framework

### **1. Background of the study**

For an organization, the value of employees can never be understated. This is because employees are the most valuable assets both in private and public organizations; employees and their behavior are at the center of business success or failure (Wachira, 2013). The employee engagement dynamics and resultant human capital interventions and outcomes vary significantly depending on the industry or region of the model of operation. This has led to growing interests from policymakers and practitioners on how public service employees are managed. The psychological contract in many cases is considered an individual's beliefs of the reciprocal exchange agreement between the employee and the entities or organization that employs them. Hence, a psychological contract is created when one party believes that future rewards have been promised, that he/she has made the relevant contributions, and as a consequence, the other party is obligated to provide the promised benefits in return (Rousseau in Alcove et al., 2017). The psychological contract can be analyzed based on an evaluation-oriented framework, content-oriented and feature-oriented framework (Hofmans & Vantilborgh, 2019). These form the foundation of the focus of this study.

In Europe, according to Jacobson (2018), recruitment and induction processes are considered by employees as active influencers when it comes to commitment, and that these processes' individual steps might seem positively influential to any employee while at the same time causing the opposite result to another employee. Mentoring, successful communication, information, pre-existing knowledge of the organization, being welcomed and support into a new workplace are relevant; and help employer brand arise above others. In Australia, De Nobile (2016) found a correlation between increased amounts of open and accessible levels and models of communication for employees and levels of reported job satisfaction and commitment with an emphasis on the significance of asserting support.

According to Zhou, Plant, Zheng and Bernard (2014), in the Chinese companies; psychological contract satisfaction for knowledge workers increases their commitment in the organization thus influencing the employees to realize increased work satisfaction. Psychological contract commitment levels by such employees are very high which leads to fulfilment of work requirements as they perceive the psychological and physical incentives. Applying the principle of mutual benefit as a basis, knowledge workers therefore enhance commitment to their organizations, and as a result, boost their work satisfaction (Zhou et al., 2014).

Antonaki and Trivellas (2014), in a study on the Greek banking sector noted that positive perceptions regarding employees' psychological contract yield more satisfied workers especially with positive evaluations about their relationships and their work content, leading, in turn, to more committed ones who are willingly engaged in extra-role behaviors and tasks which strengthen their bond with their organization. Good employment relationships are strong predictors of job satisfaction and organizational employee commitment.

In Kenya, a study by Okoth (2012), established that envisaged violation of psychological contract can affect employee commitment. In addition, according to Wachira (2013), there is a strong positive correlation between obligation/commitment of employer noting that there is evidence of a positive correlation about an employee's job satisfaction and a negative correlation between psychological contract and organizational commitment. These findings however, are conflicting with an earlier study carried out in other places. According to study in Nairobi by Namakwa (2010), a positive correlation exists between employee psychological contract and organizational citizenship behavior.

Introduction and implementation of performance contracts, a study undertaken and at Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI) by Osorio (2010), did not affect employees' perceptual views of the psychological contract. Longurasia (2008) in a study Kenya meat Commission (KMC) found that psychological contract is fulfilled by attaching and matching jobs with responsibilities, facilitating a positive link between colleagues and nurturing favorable communication. Similarly, according to Wachira (2013), reward, adequate remuneration by the employer and recognition worked towards building trust between employees and management at Barclays Bank of Kenya.

## 2. Situation of Migori County

Migori County has been registering higher rates of staff turnovers. Many employees are leaving work through resignations (Ogoye, 2013). A select group of employees like nurses and ECD teachers at different levels have considered strike as a way to communicate with the employer. Other key officers in various departments have registered an increasing rate of job truancy, lack of customer care ethics and in some cases sit-in elements have been noted in the offices. The level the employees of the county government lack of interest in their jobs have also been seen in cases where they report to the job and leave immediately, bringing a notion they are around yet they have gone to seek their own business endeavors (Munene & Kibisu, 2014). They may leave their personal materials like coats and bags in the offices, but they do not work according to what they have been hired to undertake. Their levels of psychological contracts have considerably gone down. As much as formal contracts have been key motivators to employee dissatisfaction leading to strikes and job exits have been common among Migori county employees. In many cases, it is believed that the psychological contracts have been the greatest force behind the curtains due to strong feelings and beliefs of betrayal and exploitation of employees by the employer, the Migori county government. Thus, creating a misconception of the employers or supervisors as being non-human creatures who lack employee interest at heart and only concerned with profit-making and organizational growth at the expense of employee's welfare (Oyugi, 2015).

Since the time of devolution, there were various government ministry functions that were devolved to the counties. According to Omollo and Oloko (2015), such duties included the roles of the nurses that have since been taken over by the county governments. ECD teachers have also been devolved, and this has always meant that the devolved employees get their salaries from the county government. They also have their job descriptions given by the county governments. Notably, such employees need to have their performance measurements and evaluation done by the county government. Alongside the devolved employees comprises the key county staff that was created by the promulgation of the new constitution. They are the people who carry out the day to day work at the county government offices and its subsidiaries. The number of employees under the county government is therefore large. However, when it comes to the elements that influence their levels of job satisfaction, they all face the same conditions. Therefore, lack of job commitments in Migori county government realized through work truancy, absenteeism, go slow, sit-ins and sometimes notices of strike have all been manifest among all the employees (Munene & Kibisu, 2014).

## 3. Statement of the Problem

Migori county government workers have shown different kinds of lack of interest and dissatisfaction to their work. In many cases, they have shown work truancy and high levels of absenteeism. In other cases, the level of job performance has been very low. The county government employees have registered informal sit-ins at work and others have been involved in different kinds of a strike. There are county employees who are normally on go slow and thus reduce their levels of job performance. Since there have not been any reasonable undertaking aimed at devising the problems the employees face, their levels of work disinterest have continuously been increased. This has always resulted in reduced psychological contracts. The psychological contract is the implicit, unwritten, informal, mutual and mental expectations of an employee or employer on what benefits they expect from their association. Lack of commitment to the workplace should be a concern for every organization. In order to survive, an organization should be able to manage employees' psychological contract so as to achieve commitment from the latter. It is an expectation that employees serve to the fullest capacity and develop a sense of ownership and belonging to the organizations. However, most employees have a predominantly transactional psychological contract with their employer, irrespective of the status. This has been a prominent feature with most employees showing redundancy in working and warranting close supervision to enhance their performance. Lack of commitment affects employee performance and subsequently organizational performance. Several studies have, however, concentrated on the cost of employee turnover or intention to leave; with less focus on the content, features and evaluation approaches which have subsequently been the driving force behind most strikes and job exits which prompt dissatisfactions. The research studies that have been conducted elsewhere have concentrated on looking at the possible reasons and ways to motivate employees. However, there has not been a focused study developing either theoretical or empirical literature that would be applicable to the situation of Migori county government employee's management requirements. The need for the study is further necessitated by the increasing level of organizational values and concepts. The study was, therefore, got from the gaps realized in both the theoretical and empirical literature analysis. The employment problems in Migori County have been evident through high job turnover and high rates resignations from work, grievances, strikes, go-slows and sit-ins. This study therefore, seeks to explore the effect of psychological contract on employee commitment in Migori County Government.

### 3.1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of feature-oriented framework on employee's commitment in Migori County Government.

### 3.2. Objectives of the Study

To establish the influence of feature-oriented framework on employee's commitment in Migori County Government.

### 3.3. Research Hypotheses

- $H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between feature-oriented framework and employee commitment of employees in Migori County Government.

There is no statistically significant relationship between feature-oriented framework and employee commitment. The  $P$ -value was found to be and 0.000 with  $\beta=0.068$ . This  $P$ -values was less than 0.05 implying that there is a statistically significant relationship between feature-oriented framework and employee commitment. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and adoption of the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between feature-oriented framework and employee commitment. These findings concur with the findings by Hassan, Abdul-Rahman and Basit (2017) that feature-oriented framework leads to positive employee commitment in an organization.

### 3.4. Significance of the Study

The study is and will remain significant to the national government that is concerned with policy making, specifically the Ministry of Labour, the Federation of Kenya Employers and labor unions on pertaining issues of employee psychological contract. It will also be significant to Migori County government in regard to satisfaction of employees' psychological contract as this will help them better understand how to improve work performance of the county employees. The study is anticipated to enhance the delivery of services to the citizens which is realized when the employees are emotionally bonded to the organization and dedicated to its mandate. To the employees, it will help instill positive attitude crucial for career growth and development. To individual families the study will help address the issue of employees' job dissatisfaction and frustrations which are normally transferred back home; hence remedy to both the families and clients who are prone to mistreatment. This study will further inform policymakers on how best to tap the potentials of the employees. The policymakers thus can find a reliable source of knowledge that can formulate employee-related policies from the outcome of the current research thesis. In the world of academia, the study will contribute to the existing field of knowledge by provision of more insights into human resource management. This will bring an iota of knowledge concerning psychological contract and worker commitment.

### 3.5. Herzberg's Two Factor Theory

Hygiene- Motivation Theory sprang up from a study on job satisfaction undertaken with respondents comprising of 203 account technicians and engineers by Herzberg, Mauser and Snyderman in Pittsburg in 1959 (Koçel, 2010, p. 626; Stello, 2011). Participants probed to express when they feel quite good or bad about themselves in the place of work (Stello, 2011). Noting the responses of the participants, it was established that internal contents were considered achievements, responsibility when they feel good and highly satisfied; but they mention exterior contents as wages, working conditions when they feel bad and not satisfied (Stello, 2011). In view of the study results, there are two categories of factors affecting job satisfaction. There are the hygiene factors covering the process of getting the job done thus external factors. Also, there is the latter which is the motivation such as rewards, praises that comprise internal factors which influence workers development of positive attitudes towards work. The attitudes are possible by meeting their self-actualization needs. These factors are also called motivation factors (Herzberg et al., 1959).

According to Herzberg et al. (1959), job dissatisfaction occurs in the absence of the hygiene factors but existence of these factors alone doesn't provide job satisfaction and motivation. This means that it is only occurring with the presence of motivations which are internal factors; job satisfaction accompanied with the motivation. Accordingly, the theories of hygiene factors are defined like company policies and business management. There are also other factors like working conditions, salaries and wages. The theory further presents other key factors like employee benefits, model managers, and development of relationships between workers at the same level and subordinates (Fredrick Herzberg's (1959) Finally, there is also the consideration of status and promotion, occupational security and respect for personal life. These factors are also called as hygiene factors (Koçel, 2010; Stello, 2011).

### 3.6. The Expectancy Theory (Lawler and Porter, 1968)

Lunenburg (2011) states that in every organization, motivation is a key element in achieving strategic goals. In connection with the successful achievement of individual and collective objectives it is therefore important to organizations the need to align their activities to employee motivational needs. To such organizations, employee expectations are very important factors of development in the organizational productivity index (Harter et al, 2002). Efforts alone according to Porter and Lawler (2003) do not always translate into performance for most employees and their organizations. This is the reason why porter and Lawler conducted a research that revealed the elements of employee motivation as those that go beyond the simple acts of employee efforts. This means that in line was the job performance as separate variable. Accordingly, the theory tried to explain the complex relationship between rewards and motivation (Lunenburg, 2011).

In Migori county case, the theory will also be useful in understanding the position of the county employees based on their level of commitments to their work. As applied to this study the theory holds that the dependent variable, Employee commitment is related to perceptions of their working environment (Koçel, 2010). The theory was used to explore and possibly provide explanations on how the changes in the people's expectations could possibly result in the development of job dissatisfactions and disinterest.

### 3.7. Empirical Literature Review

According to the research report by De Cuyper and Isaksson (2017) that focused on Employment contracts and well-being among European workers, it was found out that enriching the works environment is a useful tool that improves the level of feature-orientation of employees. Therefore, the explanatory-based research is a useful addition to the research study as a way to improve the success of the organizational values in the county.

## 4. Methodology

Explanatory study design was used, based on quantitative approach. The sampling technique used was cluster sampling. Quantitative data was collected using questionnaires from 281 Migori County staff from four sub-counties. The researcher administered questionnaires directly to the target respondents. The hypotheses generated for this research were tested using inferential statistics in order to generalize the results. It was not feasible to undertake qualitative research since it was not founded on exploration of the topic by understanding of the individual participant's perception. Frequency tables were used to present the findings. Tests of statistical assumptions were carried out before data analysis to avoid invalidation of statistical analysis.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Returned	281	100%
Unreturned	0	0%
Total	281	100%

Table 1: Response Rate  
Source: Author, 2020

All of the 281 questionnaires were duly filled and returned, thus, representing 100% response rate.

## 5. Findings

The research objective was to establish the extent to which feature-oriented framework influences employee commitment in Migori County, Kenya. The feature-oriented framework includes; job stability, organization structure, presence of trade union, accommodative organizational culture and professional ethics/motives.

The test of  $\beta_2=0.238$  (coefficient of Feature oriented framework) statistics revealed that there was sufficient evidence that Feature oriented framework was linearly related to Employee Commitment (Value of test statistics:  $t=5.044$ ;  $p\text{-value}=0.000$ ). This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and adoption of the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between Feature-oriented framework and employee commitment. These findings concur with the findings by Hassan, Abdul-Rahman and Basit(2017) that feature-oriented framework leads to positive employee commitment in an organization.

Cohen and Ehrlich (2019) developed a feature-oriented study of psychological contract to theoretically identify and empirically investigate the dimensions of the psychological contract. Agarwal (2011) conducted research to study the relationship between psychological contract and organizational commitment in the Indian Information and Technology sector. The findings of the research show that the Psychological contract of employees in Indian IT industry is positively and significantly correlated to their organizational commitment (Behery, Paton & Hussain, 2012).

Rather than focusing on the specific terms of a contract, feature-oriented framework measures address the characteristic properties that might be used to differentiate contracts regardless of their specific content (Hassan et al., 2017; Gerber & Lange, 2017).The feature-oriented framework has an important advantage over the content-oriented approach because it can be used to guide the development of general measures that can be used across situations. It can also help in clarifying the distinction between different types of contract. The more recent notion of a balanced contract (Ho et al. in McInnis et al., 2009) have also been distinguished from the others in terms of its features (i.e., open-ended and specific). Although the feature-oriented approach cannot be substituted for an evaluation-oriented approach (fulfillment vs. breach), it might complement such an approach in explaining the nature of an employee's relationship with their organization including their commitment and their duration of employment. Duration of employment is conceptualized to affect how individuals perceive the bond with their employer (McInnis et al., 2009).

## 6. Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions for the study. From the foregoing findings; It was concluded that there is significance influence of feature-oriented framework on employee commitment.

## 6. Recommendations

Given these results, the empirical research that links psychological contract to employee commitment, the following recommendations in the area of human resource activities are offered to assist management to clarify and sustain the psychological contract. Recruitment and Orientation During recruitment interviews, HRM personnel should clearly and honestly communicate the responsibilities and expectations of the employee, as well as those the organization will give in exchange in terms of psychological contract and employee commitment.

Realistic job previews that contain a detailed description of relevant job aspects, including negative as well as positive features, will contribute to the formation of pragmatic psychological contracts and reduce turnover. Organizational Rules, Policies and Procedures The organization's rules, policies and procedures should be based on the foundation of distributive, procedural and interactional justice.

Variable	Coefficient	t-statistics	Sig.(2-tailed) (P-values)
Constant	2.016	8.923	0.000
FOF	0.238 (0.000)	5.044	0.000

Table 2: Regression Model Coefficients Results for Feature-Oriented Framework  
Source: Author, 2020

## 7. Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy

### 7.1. Contribution to Theory

The findings from this study will contribute to the Human resource body of knowledge and will provide insight on matters of satisfaction of employees' psychological contract as well as help in enhancing the delivery of services to the citizens which is realized when the employees are emotionally bonded to the organization and dedicated to its mandate. Finally, the study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing more insights into human resource development. This was by bringing an iota of knowledge on psychological contract and employee commitment.

### 7.2. Contributions of Finding to Practice and Policy

The findings from this study will contribute to the improvement on the perceptions of both the employer and the employee. It will provide a level playground for the stakeholders on matters of Psychological Contract and employee commitment. To address the concept, both parties will discuss openly during the recruitment process. Finally, the study will contribute to the improvement of relationships between the employer and employee due to mutual understanding heightened in the both parties.

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