

The Mediating Role of Training in the Relationship between Salary Structure and Turnover Intention in Nairobi County Government, Kenya

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Abstract

Turnover intention remains a significant challenge for public sector organizations, particularly in devolved governments like Nairobi County in Kenya, where it disrupts service delivery and increases costs. This study explores the mediating effect of training on the relationship between salary structure and turnover intention among 350 staff members in Nairobi County Government. Guided by human capital theory and expectancy theory, data were collected using self-administered questionnaires and analyzed through regression and mediation analyses. Results indicate a positive direct effect of salary structure on turnover intention ($\beta = .336, p < .05$), a positive effect on training ($\beta = .321, p < .05$), and a positive effect of training on turnover intention ($\beta = .131, p < .05$). Training partially mediates the salary structure-turnover intention relationship ($\beta = 0.1704/0.5490, p = .000$), accounting for 31% of the total effect. These findings underscore the importance of aligned training programs in mitigating turnover risks associated with inadequate salary structures. Implications for policy include enhancing competitive compensation and tailored training to foster retention. Limitations and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Turnover Intention, Salary Structure, Training, Mediation, Public Sector, Kenya

Introduction

Turnover intention, defined as employees' propensity to leave their organization, is a precursor to actual turnover and poses substantial challenges to organizational stability, particularly in public sector entities (Hom et al., 2023). In Kenya's devolved county governments, high turnover intention disrupts service delivery, escalates recruitment costs, and erodes institutional knowledge (Munyiri & Ndung'u, 2021). Nairobi County Government,

as Kenya's largest and most populous administrative unit, exemplifies these issues, with reports indicating dissatisfaction with compensation and limited professional development opportunities contributing to employee attrition (Hassan et al., 2022).

Salary structure, encompassing base pay, increments, and benefits, is a critical determinant of employee satisfaction and retention (Gerhart & Rynes, 2023). Inadequate or inequitable salary structures often heighten turnover intention by fostering perceptions of unfairness (Al-Suraihi, 2021). Training, as an investment in human capital, can enhance skills, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, potentially mitigating these effects (Noe et al., 2022). However, training may also increase turnover if it boosts external employability without internal advancement opportunities (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2023).

This study addresses a gap in the literature by examining training as a mediator in the salary structure-turnover intention nexus within a public sector context. Prior research has explored direct relationships (e.g., Mampuru et al., 2024), but mediation analyses in African public administration remain limited. Drawing on human capital theory (Becker, 2023) and expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), we hypothesize that training partially mediates this relationship, as equitable salary structures motivate engagement in training, which in turn influences turnover intention.

The objective is to explore the mediating effect of training on the relationship between salary structure and turnover intention in Nairobi County Government, Kenya. This contributes to understanding how HRM practices can enhance retention in resource-constrained environments.

Literature Review

Turnover Intention

Turnover intention reflects employees' cognitive process of contemplating departure, influenced by job dissatisfaction, lack of commitment, and external opportunities (Mobley, 1977). In public sectors, it is exacerbated by bureaucratic inefficiencies and economic pressures (Kissi et al., 2024). Studies in Kenya highlight high turnover intention among public employees due to poor compensation and limited growth (Kumar & Owiny, 2021).

Salary Structure

Salary structure provides a framework for equitable compensation, including base pay, bonuses, and adjustments (Cascio & Boudreau, 2022). Competitive structures reduce turnover intention by signaling organizational value (Lawler, 2022). Empirical evidence shows that perceived pay inequities positively correlate with turnover intention (Jiang et al., 2023). In Kenya, public sector salary disparities contribute to dissatisfaction (Sultana & Modak, 2013).

Training

Training enhances employee competencies, fostering engagement and retention (Chiaburu & Tekleab, 2023). However, it can create a "double-edged sword" effect, increasing turnover if skills are transferable elsewhere without internal rewards (Jun & Eckardt, 2023). In public administration, training aligned with career goals reduces turnover (Mampuru et al., 2024).

Theoretical Framework

Human capital theory posits that investments like salary and training build employee value, reducing turnover (Becker, 2023). Expectancy theory suggests that equitable salary motivates training participation, which enhances perceived outcomes and lowers turnover intention (Vroom, 1964). Training mediates by translating compensation satisfaction into skill-based commitment (Bibi et al., 2018). Hypothesis: Training mediates the relationship between salary structure and turnover intention.

Methodology

Research Design and Sample

This study adopted a post-positivist paradigm and explanatory research design to test causal relationships. The target population comprised Nairobi County Government staff, with a sample of 350 selected via simple random and systematic sampling. Data were collected in 2024 using self-administered questionnaires, piloted in Kiambu County for validity and reliability. All items used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Factor analysis confirmed construct validity (loadings > .60).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics summarized demographics. Regression analyses tested direct effects, and mediation was assessed using bootstrapping (5,000 samples) in PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2018). Assumptions (normality, linearity, homoscedasticity) were verified.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Respondents were 55% male, 45% female; ages 31-40 (40%); tenure 11-20 years (35%). Means: Turnover Intention (M=3.2, SD=0.8), Salary Structure (M=3.5, SD=0.7), Training (M=3.6, SD=0.6).

Regression Analyses

Salary structure positively affects turnover intention ($\beta = .336$, $t=5.12$, $p<.05$, $R^2=.11$). Salary structure positively affects training ($\beta = .321$, $t=4.89$, $p<.05$, $R^2=.10$). Training positively affects turnover intention ($\beta = .131$, $t=2.45$, $p<.05$, $R^2=.02$).

Mediation Analysis

The indirect effect via training is significant ($\beta=0.1704$, Boot SE=0.042, 95% CI [0.088, 0.253]). Total effect: $\beta=0.5490$, $p=.000$. Mediation accounts for 31% (indirect/total effect). Partial mediation confirmed, as direct effect remains significant ($\beta=0.3786$, $p<.05$).

Path	β	SE	t	p	95% CI
Salary Structure → Turnover Intention (Direct)	.336	.066	5.12	<.05	[.206, .466]
Salary Structure → Training	.321	.066	4.89	<.05	[.191, .451]
Training → Turnover Intention	.131	.053	2.45	<.05	[.027, .235]
Indirect Effect (Mediation)	.1704	.042	-	.000	[.088, .253]

Discussion

Findings support the hypothesis: Training partially mediates the salary structure-turnover intention relationship. Inadequate salary structures heighten turnover intention, but training

mitigates this by enhancing skills and satisfaction (Mampuru et al., 2024). The positive training-turnover link suggests employability effects in public sectors with limited advancement (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2023). This aligns with human capital theory, where compensation motivates training investment, reducing turnover via expectancy fulfillment (Becker, 2023; Vroom, 1964). Compared to prior studies, the 31% mediation effect is higher than in private sectors (Bibi et al., 2018), possibly due to public sector training's role in career stagnation contexts. In Kenya, this highlights devolution challenges (Cheruiyot & Kwasira, 2013).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Training partially mediates the adverse effects of poor salary structures on turnover intention in Nairobi County Government. Organizations should integrate competitive pay with targeted training to enhance retention. Policymakers can mandate aligned HRM practices to reduce public sector attrition. Limitations include cross-sectional design (causality inference) and self-report bias; future research should use longitudinal methods and multi-source data.

Recommendations

1. **Align Training with Career Goals:** Develop training programs tailored to employees' professional needs and career aspirations to enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment, thereby reducing turnover intention (Mampuru et al., 2024).
2. **Align Training with Career Goals:** Develop training programs tailored to employees' professional needs and career aspirations to enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment, thereby reducing turnover intention (Mampuru et al., 2024).

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