

**MODERATING EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND SERVICE QUALITY IN THE
COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF ELGEYO MARAKWET**

BY

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DECLARATION

Declaration by Student

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family for wishing me well and being patient during the development of this proposal. May the Almighty God bless and uplift you.

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I thank the Almighty God for his care and grace. In a particularly profound sense of gratitude and indebtedness to my supervisors and lecturers at the School of Business and Economics of Moi University for their invaluable and untiring guidance, constructive suggestions and continuous encouragement throughout the development of my thesis. I am indebted to my family and my dear parents, for their support and encouragement. In addition, I appreciate my colleagues in the Master's journey for their assistance and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

The evolving global marketplace and technological advancements necessitate organizations to cultivate a flexible and skilled workforce for adaptability and competitiveness. In the context of government, efficient Service Quality is crucial for good governance, with decentralization emerging worldwide, showcasing successes and challenges in enhancing public service delivery, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Delivery of quality service is about effective Hiring, selection, training and management. Since the inauguration of County Governments in 2013 in Kenya, little is known of the extent to which the strategic human resource management agencies within counties have facilitated the hiring, performance evaluation, competency development and engagement initiatives of staff for Service Quality. The purpose of this study therefore was to assess the moderating effect of the organisational culture on the relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management practices and Service Quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The Specific objectives of this study were to identify the influence of hiring practices, performance evaluation, competency development and employee engagement initiatives on Service Quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County and also, to determine the moderating effect of organisational culture on the relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management Practices and Service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County in Kenya. Objective Factor Theory (OFT), The Employee-based Service Quality (EBSQ) model (service quality) model and Human capital theory, will be used. This study was based on an explanatory research design. The target population was 244 employees working in Elgeyo Marakwet County. A sample size of 152 respondents was selected using stratified, simple random sampling. Cronbach alpha and factor analysis were used to test the reliability and validity of the research instrument, respectively. Hierarchical and multiple regression models using Hayes Process macro 4.2 were applied to analyse the obtained data and to test the hypotheses. The study found that hiring practices ($\beta = .463, p < .001$), performance evaluation ($\beta = .664, p < .05$), employee engagement ($\beta = .661, p < .05$) were significant predictors of service quality. Competency development ($\beta = .066, p < .05$) did not significantly predict service quality. Organisational culture moderated the relationship between performance evaluation and service quality ($\beta = .1694, p < .05$). Organizational culture moderated the relationship between competency development and service quality ($\beta = .1920, p < .05$), employee engagement and service quality ($\beta = .1433, p < .05$). Organisational culture did not moderate the relationship between hiring practices and service quality ($\beta = .1075, p > .05$). The study contribution to knowledge is entrenched in the theoretical model developed that explains service quality for county government. The study contributes to knowledge by bringing the moderating effect of organisational culture in explaining performance evaluation, competency development and employee engagement in literature. These findings have implications for practice in that county governments need to develop performance evaluation processes, hiring processes and enhance employee engagement scores. The study recommends a longitudinal study to examine the causal effects of the variables by future researchers.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EBSQ	Employee-based Service Quality
EMCG	Elgeyo Marakwet County Government
HFC	Housing Finance Company Limited
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRMP	Human Resource Management Practices
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and innovation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFT	Objective Factor Theory
PPMC	Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation
PSC	Public Service Commission
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Competency development: refers to acquiring, improving, and enhancing the skills, knowledge, and abilities of individuals within an organization to perform their jobs effectively. Competencies are a combination of knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes that contribute to successful job performance. The goal of competency development is to align individual capabilities with the requirements of their roles and the overall objectives of the organization (Armstrong & Taylor 2020).

Employee engagement initiatives: refer to the systematic and intentional strategies and practices implemented by organizations to foster a positive organizational culture, enhance employee satisfaction and commitment, and promote employees' emotional investment and involvement in their work. These initiatives encompass a range of activities, programs, and policies designed to create a supportive and motivating workplace culture, encourage employee involvement and participation, provide opportunities for growth and development, recognize and reward employees' contributions, and promote open and effective communication throughout the organization (Saks, 2023).

Hiring practices: This study defines it as the process of locating and attracting qualified applicants for job openings in the county government and getting the right people in the right place and at the same time doing the right job to deliver efficient services which are essential to County Governments (Breugh, 2022).

Strategic Human resource management practices: defined as the implementation of good interrelated activities and processes to attract, develop, and maintain Counties Government employees (Dessler, 2023).

Organizational Culture: The organization's culture includes its vision, guiding principles, standards, organizational structures, symbols, lexicon, presumptions, beliefs, and actions (Schein, 2017)

Performance evaluation: According to this study, performance evaluation refers to the systematic process of assessing and measuring an employee's job performance against predetermined criteria and standards within an organization. It involves the collection and analysis of objective data, such as productivity metrics, quality of work, and meeting established goals, as well as subjective assessments, including feedback from supervisors, peers, and self-evaluations. Performance evaluation aims to provide feedback, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and make informed decisions related to employee development, promotions, rewards, and recognition. It is a structured and ongoing process that typically involves setting performance goals, monitoring progress, conducting formal evaluations, and providing constructive feedback to facilitate continuous improvement (Murphy & Cleveland 2022).

Service Quality: According to this study, Service Quality encompasses the fact that Counties Government employees deliver their promise in accurate, responsive, services. (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2020).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter presents a background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study and research hypothesis. The chapter also presents the justification/significance of the study, scope of the study, limitations and assumptions of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

The trend of a changing worldwide marketplace, complemented by amplified technological advancement, requires organizations to call for a more elastic and skilled workforce to be adaptive and remain competitive (Singh, Winkel & Selvanrajan, 2021). The one-size-fits-all method of management, which was in use forty (40) years ago, is currently considered to be no longer a correct strategy for guaranteeing maximum employee performance (Eigema, 2019).

The applicable benchmark to gauge government performance of good governance is through efficient and effective Service Quality to the people. Service Quality is an essential function in the relationship between government bodies and citizens. It is appropriate that in Governments, worldwide and in particular Governments where exists County Governments we view ourselves more critically. Customers are right to demand efficient services from their suppliers that accurately meet their daily needs in a fast, accessible, good quality and at a low cost, and all-encompassed in a friendlier handling. This is a real situation that calls for the government as a supplier of key public services to conduct (Chukwuemeka, Ugwuanyi, Ndubuisi-Okolo, and Onuoha 2018).

Efficient quality and reasonable Service quality are also pre-conditions of the good image of government on good governance. The significance of efficient Service Quality for the look from citizens to the government is not always appreciated honestly. Service Quality is not a strange thing, but is part of a multipart connection between government, society and citizens. According to Onyango (2018), most citizens believe that their local government is the most physical form of government they know and have, again it is the level of government with which they have maximum communication in their everyday day-to-day life. Abe and Monisola (2018) contended that the government is projected to deliver superior services to its people.

They deliver services ranging from controlling inflation, better education, and delivery of enhanced health care at reasonable rates, provision of clean water and delivery of good road networks among others. Jacqui, Shaun, and Daryl, (2021) on their study concluded that Human Service Quality is complex in modern Western societies, with extreme societal expectations, challenging demands and often delivered under fiscal limitations. Specialization can mean that individual service providers or agencies advance the expertise to deliver a very exact service, but individuals, families and communities usually encounter numerous necessities and correlated challenges.

The same focus is behind community-driven ‘grassroots’ programs that often offer ties to other outfits across less recognized paths of alliances. Decentralization has been viewed as a critical tool in revenue performance and hence contributes to offering services nearer to people in large and heavily populated economies such as China, the United States and some European countries through federal arrangements

(Clegg & Greg, 2020). According to Rosenbaum, and Rodríguez, (2021) states that the worldwide governance tendency is currently towards decentralization. Winsemius and Guntram (2021) noted that Decentralization has attracted a completely new dimension to which other National governments have reacted. Some have turned out to be tolerant of divergent opinions and democracy while some have just stood on their outdated grounds vehemently. Zungura (2018) noted that with devolution, responsibilities have been altered to locally controllable stages resulting in political steadiness and localized verdicts creating ideal situations to deal with unique needs.

The United States of America is one of the main examples of successful decentralization with up to 50 state governments and over 85,000 local governments Authorities. This has translated into vigorous development goals being focused on by the self-governing states and the federal government which have stemmed into improved service provision (Rosenbaum, & Rodríguez, (2021). In Malaysia, public sector organizations recognized that they had to strongly build up and intensify the values of worthy governance frequently to deliver efficient and effective Service Quality (Siddiquee, 2020).

Siddiquee (2020) Explained that the main obstacle to productivity and efficiency of Service Quality is labelled by numerous protests, including misuse of power, delayed action and disreputable conduct among the employees of the public service. Public anticipation in the public sector provision in delivering services reliably with citizen expectation has been considered shaky in developing countries (Palladan, Kadzrina, & Chong, 2016).

Public services in several African countries are faced with several challenges that constrain their delivery capabilities Lienert (2018); they encompass human resource

management factors, connecting to inadequacies of manpower in terms of numbers and key competencies, lack of proper attitude, and socio-psychological outlook. There are also the continuous hitches of scarcity of financial and material logistics that are key to helping effective Service quality.

Regionally, decentralization has been successful in countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda (Dickovick & Riedl, 2020). Nevertheless, the influence of decentralization has varied across nations in Africa. The linkage between decentralization and public service delivery in the situation of Sub-Saharan Africa is hardly seen. Currently, very few studies have so far gauged the effect of decentralization on Service quality in the framework of Sub-Saharan Africa (Tshukudu, 2018). In addition, there is unevenness in the attentiveness that has departed into studies on governance decentralization and Service quality.

Boris (2018), In the analysis of the challenges confronting local government administration in effective and efficient social Service quality in Nigeria, established that shortage of funds, corruption, and unnecessary political interference, amongst others, are the main limitations to local government Service quality. Alornyeku (2021) carried out a case study in Kumasi metropolis on administrative structure and Service quality. The researcher thought that the assembly of low productivity, owing to extreme bureaucracy, which is undesirable, impacted negatively the performance of the central government. The study, however, unsuccessfully considers devolved units of governance.

Lankeu and Maket (2021), In the study of public Service quality in Kenya, disclosed that public service over the years has been characterized by corruption, low productivity, inadequacy and absence of transparency and accountability. However,

there are limited studies that have conveyed progressive results of the devolution of the HR function (Daly, 2019) and Cheruiyot & Kaswira (2021) opined that there are similarly several inherent difficulties within the context of devolution that can extremely dent the optimistic outcomes reported that require to be studied.

In a study carried out in Kajiado County, the researcher noted that the main impairments to effective and efficient Service quality are interference and political manipulation, corruption and lack of accountability, transparency, inadequate citizen participation, poor human resource policy, malfunction to manage change, lack of employee competence, poor planning, and poor monitoring and evaluation (Makanyeza, Kwandai, & Ikobe 2021). There are also upsetting suggestions pointing out that the success of devolution depends on the design and enactment of the devolution layout. County governments have also experienced humiliation in both ethics and accountability in the public sector as they deliver services to their citizens.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The study will be conducted in Elgeyo Marakwet County due to the evident challenges the county faces in maintaining high service quality standards. One prominent challenge is the influence of political meddling on Strategic Human Resource Management Practices, which can impact hiring and promotion decisions. This interference may make it challenging to attract and retain skilled workers essential for public service. Additionally, financial limitations hinder the county's ability to provide continuous training and growth opportunities for employees. The county, like many others in Kenya, grapples with issues such as nepotism, mismanagement, inappropriate working environments, and politically influenced appointments (Elgeyo Marakwet County Government Report, 2021). The pressing

need to address these challenges is underscored by the fact that only 40% of Elgeyo Marakwet County employees express satisfaction with the organizational culture, as per recent statistics (EMCG customer survey 2022). This low satisfaction rate emphasizes the urgency of investigating and improving the organizational culture, as it directly influences the relationship between strategic human resource management practices and service quality. Therefore, studying Elgeyo Marakwet County serves as an important case to understand the intricate dynamics between human resource practices, organizational culture, and service quality outcomes for the residents of the county.

Despite the establishment of Public Service Boards in 2013, there has been a lack of empirical evaluation of their role in achieving quality service objectives. As a result, the extent to which human resource management agencies within the counties, including Elgeyo Marakwet County, have facilitated employee engagement initiatives, hiring, competency development, and performance evaluation of staff for service quality remains largely unknown. Shimengah (2018) in the exploratory survey on service quality and government interaction in Kenya uncovered noteworthy gaps in public perception. According to the findings, 45% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the efficiency of service quality and customer care offered by state corporations in the county. Furthermore, recent research from Transparency International (2020) indicates that a substantial 55% of citizens are discontented with the quality of essential services, including infrastructure development, water provision, electricity, healthcare, and education. These results underscore significant shortcomings in the current state of public services and point towards crucial gaps warranting further investigation. These findings underscore the need for county

governments, including Elgeyo Marakwet County, to improve their Strategic Human Resource Management Practices regarding service quality.

Ong'era and Musili (2019), in their study on factors influencing the quality of service in Kenyan county governments, also highlighted the poor performance of successive governments due to weak governance of public institutions across the nation. It is crucial to improve the level of service quality but to do so; it is necessary to investigate the factors contributing to the unsatisfactory level of service quality. According to a survey report by Transparency International (2020), 22% of the respondents identified road infrastructure and health services as the most pressing problems that county governments should address. Road infrastructure has consistently been a persistent issue, while health services have risen to become the top pressing problem. The report also revealed that 66% of respondents felt that corruption had increased in the past year, with 56% of respondents expecting corruption to increase in the coming year.

As emphasized by Draganidis and Mentzas (2019), the practice of competency management has gained increasing importance in both private and public organizations. This strategic approach plays a vital role in attracting and cultivating skilled employees, identifying optimal individuals for specific roles, facilitating succession planning, conducting training analyses, and addressing other crucial functions within Human Resources. However, the statement implies gaps in the current understanding or implementation of competency management within organizations, suggesting a need for further investigation into these areas to enhance the effectiveness of talent management practices. The lack of professionalism and employee demoralization indicated by the aforementioned results contribute to the

challenges faced by county governments, including Elgeyo Marakwet County. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to assess the strategic human resource management practices and service quality, moderated by the organizational culture, specifically in Elgeyo Marakwet County.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The overall objective of this study was to assess the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between strategic Human Resource Management practices and Service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County Government (EMCG).

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

This study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To determine the influence of hiring practices on Service quality in EMCG
- ii. To examine the effect of performance evaluation on Service quality in EMCG
- iii. To examine the influence of competency development on Service quality in EMCG
- iv. To assess the influence of employee engagement initiatives on Service quality in EMCG
- v. To determine the moderating role of organizational culture on the relationship between;
 - a. hiring practices and Service quality in EMCG
 - b. performance evaluation and Service quality in EMCG
 - c. competency development and Service quality in EMCG
 - d. employee engagement initiative and Service quality in EMCG

1.4 Hypothesis

The study sought to test the following hypotheses:

- H₀₁:** There is no statistically significant influence of hiring practices on Service quality in EMCG
- H₀₂:** There is no statistically significant effect of performance evaluation on Service quality in EMCG
- H₀₃:** There is no statistically significant influence of competency development on Service quality in EMCG
- H₀₄:** There is no statistically significant influence of Employee engagement initiatives on Service quality in EMCG
- H₀₅:** There is no statistically significant moderating effect of organizational culture;
- H_{05 (a)}:** on the relationship between hiring practices and Service quality in EMCG
- H_{05 (b)}:** on the relationship between performance evaluation and Service quality in EMCG
- H_{05 (c)}:** on the relationship competency development and Service quality in EMCG
- H_{05(d)}:** on the relationship between employee engagement initiative and Service quality in EMCG

1.5 Scope of the Study

The focus of this study was to assess the strategic Human Resource Management practices and Service quality in EMCG as moderated by organizational culture. Strategic Human Resource Management Practices was limited to hiring practices, performance evaluation, Employee engagement initiatives and competency development. The research was confined to EMCG.

The research design was explanatory and conducted between February and April 2024. The expected budget was Ksh. 106,560. In an attempt to link the variables of the study, several theories were proposed. For this study, Human capital theory (for the independent variable), The Employee-based Service Quality (EBSQ) model (for the dependent variable), also the main theory in the study, and Objective Factor Theory (OFT) (For the moderating variable) was used. The target population for the study consisted of 244 individuals from different positions within the county's government structure. This includes Chief Officers, Directors, Members of the Public Service Board, Human Resource Staff, and Ward Administrators.

In regards to the justification of the study, it is in records that since the inauguration of Public Service Boards, in 2013, not much empirical evaluation of their Human Resource Management role in achieving quality service objectives has been attempted, and this has led to little known extent to which Human Resource Management agencies within the 47 counties have facilitated Hiring, Competency Development and performance evaluation of staff for Quality Service quality also there has been an outcry from the public that County Governments are unable to effectively provide efficient services (Auditor General, 2016). In the selection of the county, several factors were considered, which included the geographical position of the county, the size of the county in terms of population and the level of Service quality from time to time after the National Government funding.

1.6 Justification/Rationale for the Study

The study is beneficial to several stakeholders, which include the government of Kenya, county governments, the society, scholars and researchers. The best yardstick to measure government performance is through Service quality to the people. The

study informs national government policy on the devolution and Service quality in county governments in Kenya. By illustrating the effects of human resource management on Service quality in county governments in Kenya, policymakers will use the findings of this study to better align or revise the existing legal framework, policies and guidelines of the devolution process. Further, the findings will influence the national government to develop appropriate policies to enhance devolution processes to improve Service quality to the public and thus propel the country towards achieving Vision 2030.

Furthermore, the national government will use the findings to come up with strategic human resource management interventions to enhance devolution and Service quality to citizens. The study also informs the best methods to employ in making a turnaround in Service quality both at national and county government levels. This study finally came up with policy recommendations that may be used by the national government to improve Service quality to the public.

The county governments, which took effect with the new constitutional dispensation, are expected to benefit a lot from the study findings primarily because the study addresses the Service quality in their counties. The county governments are expected to play a critical role in improving service quality to the people. This study informs county assemblies and county executives on whether the devolution of human resource management has improved Service quality to the people as was expected by the constitution. The members of the county assembly may use the findings of this study to better align or revise the existing county legal framework, to promote Service quality in the counties.

This study came up with policy recommendations, which can be used by county assemblies and county executives to improve Service quality in county governments. This study helps the entire society as it seeks to explain the relationship between devolution and Service quality. By illustrating the influence of HRMP on Service quality in county governments in Kenya, the finding may shape future HRM devolution debate in the entire Kenya society. The findings of this study may also benefit the entire Kenyan society, including private practitioners, by providing them with an in-depth understanding of the relationship between HRMP and Service quality.

Similarly, the finding of this study is of significance to other African developing countries especially the members of the East African community, that are culturally, economically, and politically similar to Kenya. Implementation of the recommendations of this study translates into efficient Service quality to the Kenyan public service thereby ensuring value for money. To the scholars, the study is of value-added to the existing body of knowledge as it develops a comprehensive model of governance decentralization in Kenya and beyond. The study thus benefits the scholars wishing to undertake further studies aimed at improving governance decentralization structures in local and global contexts. Academic researchers can be able to refer to the data used in the study and benefit from the findings, cognizant that rich literature is unavailable in Kenya relating to HRMP and Service quality. Moreover, the framework of the study may be a useful tool for academicians and other researchers wishing to replicate this study in different counties and countries. Nevertheless, this study serves as a stepping stone for newer research on the role of Strategic Human Resource Management Practices on Service quality in Kenya.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The reviewed concept of Service quality, concept of human resources, theoretical framework, empirical Review of literature and the conceptual framework

2.1 Concept of Service Quality

Service quality refers to the provision of social or public goods that will promote the socio-economic well-being of the citizens. Public services offered by the government are numerous and may incorporate the provision of public utilities, security, economic development projects, the execution of the law and so on. The delivery of public goods and services at the local government level or the grassroots is intended to raise the standard of living of the population to the next level (Angahar, 2021). In Russia Freinkman and Plekhanov (2020) on fiscal decentralization and the quality of public services used service quality as a measure of Service quality. Consequently, the efficient and effective provisions of basic facilities and social infrastructures for the people at the grassroots are key factors to the existence of any government (Bolaito and Ibrahim, 2018).

The study carried out by Wagana (2017) on the effect of governance decentralization on Service quality in County Governments in Kenya, opined that Service quality is a necessary function in the relationship between government and citizens, the study furthered that Government performance is measured through Service quality to its people and the best gauge to ration government performance of good governance is through Service quality to the people whereas Scholars around the globe contend that

Service quality is an indicator of the health of a society, which strengthens the social contract between the state and its citizens.

The basic development goal for any country is to accomplish broad-based, sustainable improvement in the standards of quality of life for its citizens. The Public service and specifically the civil service plays an essential role in the effective delivery of public services that are key to the functioning of a state economy. When the delivery of services is compelled or becomes ineffective, it affects the quality of life of the people and the nation's development process as a whole. The public sector is, however, indeed more complex than the private sector, which has the luxury of a single dominant objective, that of profit maximization, to focus its efforts (Kobia, 2019).

Olala and Ngacho (2018) opined that in the current business environment, the role of service provision has gained considerable motion. It has been noticed that most organizations are moving away from a selling focus towards a service focus in an attempt to satisfy the needs of customers more efficiently and effectively. In this context, Service quality is recognized as a means of achieving differentiation, customer value, and satisfaction. They furthered that, according to recent figures, services account for over fifty per cent of the gross domestic product in the USA and many European countries, and over one-quarter of world trade. More importantly, levels of service that may have been tolerated only a generation ago are now regarded as unacceptable. They concluded that Service quality enhancement has thus become one of the most important problems facing management today, where Service quality represents a customer's assessment of the overall level of service offered by an organization.

The public sector provision of services is immensely complicated by shared or sometimes inconsistent aims, the demands of stakeholders and the influence of politicians (Tilley & Smart, 2020). The distinction between direct and indirect Service quality is significant for how matters need to be organized. Direct services involve direct contact with citizens and demand an alert attitude from the municipal staff concerned. Everything they do, and how well they do it, directly affects the people for whom they work. Indirect services often involve an extra step. Sometimes this is easier in terms of personal relations but may demand a greater understanding of the effect of the measures (Mezzera, Aftab, & Yusuf, 2020).

Direct Service quality is branded by the direct effect that is envisioned for citizens. There is one-on-one contact that revolves around a service, a product that the user benefits from directly and which the user often pays for. It concerns a transaction between the citizen concerned and the government in the form of a member of government staff. Indirect Service quality takes place in a context. It is derived from rules and does not only affect the applicant and/or the user. It is the user's first interest, but other interests also play a role and often require the interests to be weighed. Service quality by local governments can also concern the further provision of services to other government bodies or organizations that perform a task in the public domain where the land and population registers for example, are dependent on the quality of information and registration with municipalities: central government cannot function appropriately without a properly maintained population and land register (Tilley & Smart 2020).

Abe and Monisola (2018) contended that Service quality is a critical function in the relationship between government and citizens. A government is projected to deliver

better services to its people, and the yardstick of measuring Service quality to the people encompasses low inflation, improved education, provision of superior health care at reasonable rates, provision of clean water, provision of good roads and good road networks to the rural areas for the transport of agricultural products and raw materials. Wagana, Iravo, Nzulwa, and Kihoro, (2016) depicted Service quality as the relationship between policymakers, service providers and poor people. Service quality includes services and supporting systems typically regarded as a state responsibility. In China, Wei-qing and Shi (2020) carried out a study and discovered that fiscal decentralization on expenditure may make local governments tend to minimize the provision of public services, such as education.

Likewise, Kyriacou and Roca-Sagale (2021) used government quality to measure Service quality. Alternatively, Nayak and Samanta (2018) carried out a study in India on the role of participation in public Service quality and combined four indicators to measure Service quality. There is segmented body of research work that has measured Service quality using quality of service and citizen satisfaction. Example of a study by Sujarwoto (2021) on political decentralization and local public service performance in Indonesia. The study used citizen satisfaction with public service performance (health services, education services and general administration services) to measure Service quality.

Improving Service quality through increased accountability has been an important motivation behind the trend towards decentralization in developing countries (Hasnain, 2020). Equally, elected local policy-makers, responding to this greater citizen vigilance, focus on improving Service quality to get re-elected (Hasnain, 2020). Olatona and Olomola (2018) analyzed the influence of fiscal decentralization

on health and educational Service quality between 1999 and 2012. The study found that fiscal decentralization has a positive link with educational Service quality, while the high degree of fiscal decentralization is negatively related to health care delivery.

The Nigerian constitution assigns Service quality responsibilities to the three tiers of government with states and local government playing the most significant role in the delivery of basic services. Thus, local government councils are required to serve the public interest in areas of constructing roads, public markets, healthcare centres, drainages, transportation, motor parks, and building primary schools, among others (Bolatito & Ibrahim, 2018). Some of the services anticipated by local government authorities include education, health, housing, water, rural electricity, waste disposal services, roads, transport, and so on (Adeyemi, 2021; Agba, Akwara, and Idu, 2021).

Alao, Osakede and Owolabi (2018), carried out a study on local governance and Service quality and stated that lack of funds prompted by low budgetary allocation, restricted revenue sources available to local government and inability to effectively exploit its internal sources of revenue generation had impacted negatively on the provision of public goods at the local level. The majority of previous decentralization research focused on one measure of Service quality that is, service accessibility. The empirical evidence on the link between decentralization governance and Service quality is highly inconclusive.

An improvement in the Service quality can attract more customers and retain a good public image of a firm. More precisely, target achievement is necessary to build a good public image of an organization. The identification of Service quality with target achievement has increased over time due to an improved service charter which defines Service quality standards, rights of customers and how to handle customer

complaints. 'The customers usually evaluate the service provider or agent depending on the effectiveness and quality of Service quality. Poor Service quality leads to loss of trust in the service provider especially in the public offices where the service 'is not available elsewhere. When services in public offices are not as per the customers' expectations, the citizens (customers) are disappointed and lose trust in the service provider (Draft, 2019).

According to Mozael (2018), Service quality is the achievement of specific tasks measured against predetermined or identified standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed. Service quality can be manifested in improvement in production, easiness in using the new technology and highly motivated workers. Service quality is an outline set of principles, standards, policies and constraints used to guide the design, development, deployment, operation and retirement of services delivered by a service provider to offer a consistent service experience to a specific user in a specific business. An improvement in the Service quality can draw more customers and create a good public image of a firm. More accurately, customer satisfaction is necessary to build a good public image of an organization. The identification of Service quality with customer satisfaction has increased over time. 'The customers usually evaluate the service provider or agent depending on the effectiveness and quality of Service quality. These actions create a specific public image of the service provider in the minds of the consumers of these services. Poor Service quality results in to loss of trust in the service provider particularly in the public offices where the service 'is not available elsewhere.

When services in public offices are not as per the customers' expectations, the citizens (customers) are dissatisfied and lose confidence in the service provider. This therefore

demands dependable effective and efficient Service quality in county governments' offices as per the Kenyan Constitution and County Government Act 2012. In this study, Service quality is conceptualized as accessibility of services, efficiency of services, quality of services and citizen satisfaction with water, health, rural roads, and sewer services. Delivery of quality service begins with recruitment, hiring selection, training and the management of performance, Employee engagement initiatives and competency development (Onchari, Iravo & Elijah, 2018). Related studies also support that quality service provision begins with the hiring and selection process (Chukwu & Igwe, 2021).

In Kenya, it has been witnessed that a lack of coordination between the County Executive and County assemblies has constantly contributed to wrangles on fund allocation and utilization, which has resulted in poor Service quality and wastage of public resources (Karimi, Kimani, & Kinyua, 2017). Many citizens in Kenya are still hoping that the devolved system of government will deliver the needs and aspirations of the people. However, due to the complexities and logistics involved, the success of these countries relies on the full utilization of HR key practices not limited to hiring, performance evaluation, Employee engagement initiatives and competency development. In the absence of these human resource practices, efforts to counties devolution will be impossible. It is against this background that the study sought to model the Role of Strategic Human Resource Management Practices on Service quality among Counties in EMCG: Moderating Effect of Organizational culture. The question of the effectiveness and efficiency with which these services are rendered and whether the clients get the best value for their money arises.

Service quality, crucial in the provision of social and public goods for the well-being of citizens, encompasses various dimensions such as accessibility, efficiency, and citizen satisfaction. It extends across a spectrum of public services offered by governments, including utilities, security, economic development projects, and law enforcement. Scholars emphasize the significance of service quality as a metric for evaluating government performance and good governance (Kobia, 2019). This involves not only the direct impact on citizens through services like healthcare and education but also indirect services that shape the overall well-being of the population. Achieving and maintaining high service quality is fundamental for building public trust, enhancing citizen satisfaction, and fostering a positive public image for government entities. The study recognizes the complexity of the public sector, requiring effective Strategic Human Resource Management Practices, including recruitment, training, and employee engagement, to ensure the delivery of quality services, particularly in the context of decentralization in counties.

2.2 Concept of Strategic Human Resource Management Practices

Human resource management (HRM) practices are intended to enable and back the recruitment, hiring, development, and management of employees to raise levels of employee performance and satisfaction. The most effective Strategic Human Resource Management Practices are performance appraisal, training and development, reward and compensation, Employee engagement initiatives, and health and safety (Ming 2021). Previous research points out a strong correlation between Strategic Human Resource Management Practices on employee performance. This is because by following proper Strategic Human Resource Management Practices the employees are felt appreciated, satisfied, motivated, and more engaged with training

which will improve their performance and encourage the employees to retain (Amin, 2021).

Human resources management practices have a substantial impact on an organization's productivity. Abdulla (2020) opined that training and development, teamwork, human resources planning and performance appraisal are associated with an organization's performance. Human resources management practices cannot be overlooked when converging on an employee's performance. HRM practices have been renowned for significantly affecting organizational performance to a wider range. Aldamore, Yazam & Ahmid, (2021) consider HRM practices as a significant predictor of organizational performance.

Mutsostso and Wanyama (2020) in the study entitled *The Impact of HRMP on Employee Performance in International Non-governmental Organizations* pointed out that education and training increase employees' job skills and their insight towards efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out their tasks. This therefore means organizations that have high capacity building are expected to experience increased performance characterized by a motivated workforce. Therefore it is true that skills-building initiatives are key to employees.

Hameed and Waheed (2021) noted that the skills-building activities performed by organizations specify that the organization are concerned about its employees. While several organizations invest in their employees, the employees on the other hand develop job satisfaction from their work which in turn leads to increased employee performance. However, this development depends on the individual employee's willingness to develop, organizational culture, top management attitude and organizational opportunities for growth.

Munjuri (2021) in the study entitled, *The Impact of HRM Practices on employee performance* exhibited a significant impact of HRM practices on employee performance where the study pointed out that a successful organization reflects on the HRM practices as a crucial factor that frankly impacts the employee's performance in the organization. Hameed and Waheed (2021) pronounced seven HRM practices that relate to overall organizational performance. Alamode (2021) argued that organizations must hire skilled and capable employees to be successful in today's global environment. Actual HR practices are applied by line managers daily that positively impact employee's perception of HRM practices applied to them (Purcell & Kinnie, 2019).

The successful implementation or failure of HRM practices depends on the skills of the managers (Guest & Conway, 2021). The Human Resource Management function is the guardian of the people management processes (Armstrong, 2021; Shen, et al., 2020). The Human Resource Management toolkit addresses disparity in hiring practices, performance appraisal, employee compensation, training and development and the role of organisational culture which can increase comprehensiveness and enhance creativity in a diverse workforce (Hubbard, 2019). Despite the potential gains of the HR devolution strategy in the counties, little empirical work has been done to establish the effect of devolved recruitment and selection practices on employee performance.

Cheboror, Waiganjo, and Ragama's (2017) study conducted in Nakuru highlighted only the challenges of devolved HR functions and the possible solutions for mitigating these challenges but the degree to which these devolved HR functions have impacted Service quality in the County has not been established. A study done by

Alande (2021) in the public sector focused on the role of human resource management in the devolution of counties in Kenya while Mwikali and Wafula, (2018) and Mutua, Kabare and Namusonge (2021) looked at devolution in a general sense in Mombasa and Nairobi counties respectively. More research is therefore needed to address the effect of devolution of HR functions on employee performance. The present research therefore evaluates the effect of devolved human resource practices on Service quality in EMCG.

2.3 Concept of Organizational Culture

The rules, practices, and values that serve as a guide for all employees' actions within a company can be correctly described as the organizational culture. The characteristics that contribute to an organization's success make up its organizational culture. According to Ali Taha, Sirkova, and Ferencova (2016), a positive organizational culture generally results in higher performance and outcomes, whereas a dysfunctional organizational culture causes obstacles and has an impact on the effectiveness of performance. According to Ardit, Nayak, and Damci (2017), an organization's culture is developed by continuous, authentic behaviour and the efforts it displays toward its various employees and associated clients. The organizational culture affects all aspects of the firm, including the tone of the workplace, timeliness, general employee conduct, and corporate policies. For an organization to function efficiently even during times of difficulty, the workplace culture must be given priority (Warrick 2017).

Power must be used in any given organization to exert control and sway decisions. According to Harrison and Stokes (2016), an organization's culture that is centred on inequality of access to resources is what is meant by a power-oriented culture. "A

culture of power has a central power source from which rays of energy scatter throughout the organization, writes Brown (2018). This suggests that authority is centralized and that functional threads linking organizational representatives to the core exist (Harrison, 2016). This type of organizational culture may also be referred to as rule-oriented in that it places a strong emphasis on deference to authority, reasoned processes, task division, and normalization (Hampden-Turner, 2010). There is a power-focused community in both small and major organizations.

According to Ellinas, Allan, and Johansson (2017), the culture's main benefit is that it draws talent and outperforms the competition. Before applying for a job, many people take the company culture into account. This factor also reflects the enterprise's overall success as measured by the employee satisfaction index. To understand how an organizational culture can function well and further contribute to the overall success of the business, examples from Microsoft and Salesforce can be used (Elsbach and Stigliani 2018). Every organization has a predetermined organizational culture that develops through time and is essentially defined by a few traits. These include psychological safety as well as alignment, appreciation, trust, performance, resilience, and teamwork. The company's goals and the employees' degree of motivation can be used to identify the alignment. The groups must cooperate to inspire people and achieve their objectives. Based on the above arguments, this study is set to establish the moderating role of organizational culture on the relationship between human management practices and service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

In an attempt to link the variables of the study, several theories have been proposed. For this study, Human capital theory (for the independent variable), The Employee-

based Service Quality (EBSQ) model (dependent variable) and Objective Factor Theory (OFT) (For the moderating variable) will be used.

2.4.1 Human Capital Theory

This theory is key in assessing strategic human resources practices, the independent variable. Human Capital Theory, proposed by Becker (2019), will be adopted to understand the effect of HRM practices and Service quality. Becker (2020) asserts that current challenges such as globalization, a knowledge-based economy, and technological advancement have helped many countries and organizations to seek new ways to maintain competitive advantage Kwon (2020) opined that, Human capital is said to refer to the stock of productive knowledge and skills possessed by workers. Maina and Kwasira (2018) add that, the concept of human capital is semantically the mixture of human and capital. In tandem with the meaning of capital in the economic perspective, humans are the subject to take charge of all economic activities such as production, consumption, and transaction.

The focus in HRM, from the Human Capital perspective, is to attract, retain and develop human capital (Amstrong, 2018). Human capital is referred to in terms of the time, experience, knowledge and abilities of an individual which can be used in the production process in an ongoing concern (Heckman, 2000). According to Armstrong (2021), individuals generate, retain and use knowledge and skills to create intellectual capital. Their knowledge is enhanced by training, and interactions between themselves and this generates the additional knowledge possessed by an organization. In the context of this study, it is indeed the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals that create value which is why the focus has to be on means of hiring, retaining, developing and maintaining the human capital they represent.

The theory of Human Capital is relevant to the study because it asserts that employees have the knowledge, skills and abilities that are requisite in the provision of quality public service. The decision to employ a public servant, to serve in the County Public Service, basically involves adding to the stock of human capital. Thus, the framework provides a suitable basis for understanding the prevailing selected Strategic Human Resource Management Practices, since it explains the link between these Strategic Human Resource Management Practices (HRMP) and Service quality. The theory of human capital in HRM is relevant as it holds that the level of human capital influences firm performance (Hitt, Ireland, Camp, & Sexton 2018).

This theory states that people possess innate abilities, behaviours and personal energy which are elements that make up the human capital (Davenport, 2020). In the theory, it is the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals that create value. As a result, the focus has to be on the means of attracting, retaining and developing human capital. According to Armstrong (2020), individuals generate, retain and use knowledge that creates intellectual capital. The individual's knowledge is then enhanced by the interactions between them i.e. social capital which generates institutionalized knowledge that organizations have. According to Armstrong (2020), human capital theory sees people as assets and that organizations that invest in people improve their performance which eventually generates positive results for the organization.

On the other hand, Block (1990) argued that Human Capital Theory is a poor concept. The theory is unable to understand human activity other than seeing it as the exchange of commodities while the idea of capital employed is purely a quantitative one. This misses the point that capital is an independent social force where the creation of value

comes about through its capital accumulation. Given this explanation then, human capital is an abstract form of labour a commodity and not capital.

Another criticism argued that education improves productivity and thus could explain higher wages. The theorists here did not consider the transfer of learning. Does the duration of education and training increase productivity? A higher productivity indeed does not increase the wages. But many other factors could influence productivity. The pay could depend on the industry, while wages differ in different regions and some organizations, and unions also regulate the pay system (Denver, 2020).

According to Armstrong (2020), human capital theory sees people as assets and that organizations that invest in people improve employee performance hence efficient Service quality and this generates positive results for the organization. Block (1990) has argued that Human Capital Theory is a poor concept of capital. It is unable to understand human activity other than as the exchange of commodities and the notion of capital employed is purely a quantitative one. The theory confirms that the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals create value. As a result, the focus has to be on the means of attracting, selecting, retaining and developing human capital. This study considers it a suitable theoretical lens from which to interpret the link between hiring, Employee engagement initiatives, competency development and performance evaluation practices on Service quality in County governments in Kenya.

The gap in this study is evident in the scant exploration of alternative viewpoints or critiques of Human Capital Theory, especially those challenging its characterization of human activity as a mere exchange of commodities and its reliance on a quantitative interpretation of capital (Block, 1990). Furthermore, a more nuanced examination is required to encompass factors influencing productivity and wages

beyond education and training, including industry nuances, regional disparities, organizational policies, and the influence of unions, for a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of strategic human resource management practices on service quality in Kenyan County governments.

2.4.2 The Employee-Based Service Quality (EBSQ) Model

To evaluate service delivery at the county government level, the Employee-based Service Quality (EBSQ) model is reviewed. The Employee-based Service Quality (EBSQ) model, proposed by Schneider and Bowen (1995), is a theoretical framework that focuses on the role of employees in delivering service quality. This model recognises that employees play a crucial role in shaping customers' perceptions of service quality and emphasizes the importance of understanding employees' perspectives and behaviours.

According to the EBSQ model, service quality is influenced by three key factors: employee satisfaction, employee perceptions of customer expectations, and employee service delivery skills (Schneider & Bowen, 1995). Employee satisfaction is considered a vital factor as it directly impacts their motivation, engagement, and commitment to delivering high-quality service. Satisfied employees are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes and behaviours that contribute to exceptional service experiences for customers (Schneider & Bowen, 1995).

Employee perceptions of customer expectations refer to employees' understanding of what customers expect in terms of service quality. These perceptions shape their behaviours and decision-making processes while interacting with customers. When employees accurately perceive customer expectations and strive to meet or exceed them, it positively influences service quality (Schneider & Bowen, 1995).

Employee service delivery skills encompass the knowledge, competencies, and abilities that employees possess to perform their service-related tasks effectively. These skills include communication, problem-solving, and technical expertise, among others. When employees possess the necessary skills and use them proficiently, it enhances service quality (Schneider & Bowen, 1995).

While the EBSQ model provides valuable insights into the measurement of service quality from the employees' end, it has faced some critique. One critique is that the model primarily focuses on internal factors and may not fully capture the influence of external factors, such as organizational resources, leadership, and organizational culture, which can also impact service quality (Schneider & Bowen, 1995). Additionally, some argue that the model does not consider the dynamic nature of service interactions and the importance of customer feedback in shaping employees' perceptions of service quality (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002).

Despite these critiques, the EBSQ model remains relevant in the study as it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors that contribute to service quality from the employees' perspective. By examining employee satisfaction, perceptions of customer expectations, and service delivery skills, the model helps identify areas for improvement in strategic human resource management practices and organizational culture to enhance service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County (Schneider & Bowen, 1995).

In summary, the Employee-based Service Quality (EBSQ) model, proposed by Schneider and Bowen (1995), highlights the importance of employee satisfaction, employee perceptions of customer expectations, and employee service delivery skills in measuring service quality. Despite some critiques, the model offers valuable

insights into understanding the role of employees in delivering quality service. Its relevance to the study lies in its ability to assess service quality from the employees' end and explore the impact of strategic human resource management practices and organizational culture on service quality.

2.4.3 Schein's Model of Organizational Culture

In 2004, Schein created this model. Schein (2004) asserts that culture exists concurrently on three levels: artefacts, values, and fundamental presumptions. Assumptions are unquestioning presumptions about reality and the character of people. Values are social precepts, ideologies, objectives, and standards that are thought to have inherent value. Artefacts are the audible, visible, and physical outcomes of behaviour based on beliefs and values. The early human relations view of companies that emerged in the 1940s can be linked to the notion of organizational culture, which gained popularity in the early 1980s. The informal, non-material, interpersonal, and moral foundations of cooperation and commitment were seen by human relations theorists to be perhaps more significant than the formal, material, and instrumental controls emphasized by rational system theorists. Even earlier anthropological and sociological studies of the culture related to groups and societies (Geertz 1973; Mead 1934; Durkheim 1964; Weber 1947, 1958) served as the foundation for the human relations approach. Since the early 1980s, various cultural notions from two different academic fields (anthropology and sociology) have been used in organizational studies. The creation of various theories and frameworks of organizational culture in the academic literature can be attributed to these two concepts, which in Burrell and Morgan's (1979) framework represent opposing paradigms. By adopting the interpretive perspective, anthropology views culture as a metaphor for organizations, classifying organizations as cultures. However, sociology

adopts a functionalist perspective and characterizes culture as a quality that an organization possesses. Although there are different definitions of organizational

Different theories aimed at elucidating organizational culture and its effects on organizational culture have been developed as a result of the rising interest in culture. Organizational culture has been modelled by several authors, including Hofstede, Schein, Deal, and Kennedy (2004) and Schwartz (2006). The most popular organizational culture model is that of Edgar Schein (2004), who adopted a functionalist perspective and defined culture as a pattern of fundamental assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to deal with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that have worked well enough to be considered valid and, as a result, are to be taught to new members as the proper way to perceive, think, and feel about the organization's goals.

2.5 Empirical / Literature Review

The literature below indicates different studies and their area of focus on Strategic Human Resource Management Practices and Service quality relationships. These studies arrive at findings that have brought out the research gaps informing the current study. The study will focus on these gaps to contribute to the human resource management and Service quality debate by researchers and academicians.

2.5.1 Influence of Hiring Practice on Service Quality

Speamerfam (2021) pronounced that hiring is the greatest practice for the organization in the docket of the job of the HR department. A substantial amount of planning is needed for all this to place attractive advertisements to attract talented candidates. Afterwards, job descriptions and job specifications are put forth to stipulate details pertinent to the work, the responsibilities to handle in a particular job,

required qualifications, and technical and other required skills. In human resource planning, the turnover rate of employees is also forecasted.

Lastly, interviews are done and candidates are selected to whom training is provided so that they conduct all their job activities very well. While recruitment is the process of identifying and attracting potential candidates from within and outside an organization to begin evaluating them for future employment, hiring begins when the right calibre of candidates are identified and recommended for the job (Ekwoaba, Ikeije Okpara, and Ufoma, 2018) However, most recruitment and hiring processes have elements of personal judgment inherent in them. However treating job applicants professionally and positively is more likely to leave them, whether they are successful or not, with a positive view of the organization.

Florea and Mihai (2018) define hiring as those actions that an organization takes to attract potential candidates with the necessary skills for employment. They define hiring as the process of identification of candidate qualifications, attributes and characteristics aimed at determining their suitability for the advertised job. It means to pick and choose out. Ekwoaba et al. (2018) argue that whereas recruitment is the process of attracting and identifying potential candidates existing within and outside the organization to begin evaluating them for future employment, hiring begins when the appropriate or right calibre of candidates are identified and given job opportunities.

The recruitment activities include identification of a job vacancy need, development of a job description, progress of an organization's recruitment plan, choosing the recruitment sources that will be best satisfactory in attracting potential candidates, developing what will be stated in the job advert and agreeing how much the

recruitment process will cost. Accordingly, the main objective of hiring is to attract a suitable number of candidates while upholding minimal costs. The Human Resources department is tasked with recruiting, hiring and retaining employees, developing benefits and compensation packages and suggesting paramount practices that confirm legal compliance in all matters of employment (Compton, Morrissey & Nankervis 2018).

Habib, Islam and Rukshana (2020) in their study of appropriateness in recruitment and hiring for the desired effectiveness of the private commercial banks in Bangladesh, settled that the environmental influences that upset the banks' performance resulted in the development and growth of these banks. The influences come from the recruiters' attitudes, candidates' understanding and mindset for getting jobs sometimes, pressure from top officials from the monitoring bank, and external factors like social, political, legal and economic. Their outcome also indicated that factors like directors' intrusion and the capability of the recruiter to effectively project the interviews have a great influence on the recruitment and selection activities in the private commercial banks in Bangladesh.

On the other hand, the selection activities encompass the implementation of the firm's recruitment plan, review of the received applications, shortlisting, interviews, selecting satisfactory candidates, reference checks and record-keeping for the interview processes. To reduce staff turnover after selection, Human Resource professionals need to motivate staff through both non-monetary and monetary processes. Human Resource Practitioners encounter challenges due to the dynamism and complications of the procedure of procurement of human resources. It is therefore

important that they attract and retain the correct employees, through suitable recruitment and selection practices, in line with HR policies (Ekwoaba et al. 2018).

Recruitment and hiring activities have been altered due to the political, legal, economic, social and technological factors upsetting organizations. Consequently, the country's economic situations are associated with labour supply and labour market, which therefore influence the organizations' recruitment and selection patterns. The effect of these inspirations is that changes in national economic situations upset components like unemployment rates and remuneration levels, hence making Human Resource professionals fine-tune their recruitment and selection policies in favour of the dynamic economic environment. Variations in technology and innovation offer better quality infrastructure for use in selection and recruitment. Undesirable inspiration for this is the decreased need for labour which may indicate lower levels of employment as some employees are reduced to functionless (Ekwoaba et al. 2018).

On the other hand, culture and traditions may distress the hiring processes and decision-making in situations where the perceptions and attitudes of the senior management team are subjective due to local culture. Legislations and regulations have impacts on every function and activity of a firm. The selection and recruitment of Strategic Human Resource Management Practices should be consistent with the organization's strategy. The size of an organization commands the style used for hiring, the number of employees required, timeliness and tools used to recruit. The horizontal organizational structures, as compared to vertical ones, provide more flexibility to the process of recruitment (Genç, 2018).

The research carried out by Alqudah, Abdullah and Alquola (2018) confirms a significant association between recruitment and selection practices and employee

performance with a positive relationship effect. Compelling research work has established the impact of Strategic Human Resource Management Practices on both employee and corporate performance, these practices include recruitment and selection which provides policies and structures through which performance is realized and improved. Human resources are exceptional resources attained through the process of recruitment and selection procedures.

Correspondingly, Gamage (2018) noted that the recruitment and hiring practices will determine who is hired, and shapes employee behaviour and attitude. If correctly designed, it will detect proficient candidates and precisely pair them to the job. The use of the accurate selection device will increase the likelihood of the right person being picked to fill a slot. Ekwoaba, Ugochukwu and Ufoma (2018) conducted a study on the impact of recruitment and selection criteria on organizational performance which adopted a survey research design. Findings indicated that selection criteria have substantial consequences on an organization's performance. It was similarly established that the more unbiased the selection criteria, the better the organization's performance.

Mufu (2018) carried out research on recruitment and hiring at the National Oil Refinery Company, in Cameroon. The research design adopted was a descriptive survey. The result showed that company recruitment was based on the befitting personality and competencies of the candidates. Mavis (2018) conducted a study on "employee recruitment and selection practices in the construction industry in Ashanti Region. The study used a cross-sectional survey design for data collection and analysis. This study revealed that the recruitment and selection practice of firms has a relationship with their performances.

Ukpafe (2018) conducted a study on the effect of the recruitment and selection process on the productivity of manufacturing firms in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey design. The findings of the study were that: underperformance of employees and inability to cope with new challenges or changes had a negative influence on organizational productivity. The study equally, found that there is a positive relationship between recruitment and hiring process and productivity. Titilola (2016) researched the effect of the selection process on employee turnover in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Sunnyside, Pretoria”. A descriptive survey design was employed in the study and findings revealed that: factors influencing the selection process in SMEs were relevant experience, education, relocation and salary requirement. Djabatey (2021) conducted a study on the recruitment and selection practices of organizations, the case of HFC Bank (GH) Ltd. The study adopted a descriptive design and findings revealed that factors such as work experience, academic qualifications, interviews and tests used in selecting employees make the selection and recruitment practices very effective.

Ulasi (2021) researched “HRM and productivity in the Nigerian public sector”. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The major findings of the study revealed that; recruitment and selection processes affect the productivity of public sector workers. Ikvesi (2020) studied the effects of recruitment and hiring procedures on the efficiency of the public service in Nigeria, A descriptive survey design was applied and the major findings revealed that: recruitment and selection procedures in public service are not strictly followed; politicization and other informal processes dominate the established recruitment and selection procedures. Merit does not always count to secure employment in public service rather the use of federal character, quota system, indigene-ship, son of soil syndrome, etc. are mostly considered.

According to a study by Ong'iyo (2021) on Employee recruitment and retention practices adopted by Barclays Bank of Kenya, there are several factors influencing employees' recruitment, selection and retention. The inspiration encompasses accessibility of qualified staff, pay attractiveness, the external work atmosphere, the firm's recruitment procedures and others. The main influences of employee retention encompass job satisfaction, circumstances of service, the organization's commitment to employees, salary & benefits, opportunities for training and development, staff welfare, gender sensitivity, conflict management system, work arrangement flexibility, responsibilities and commitment outside the organization and employee attachment to the organization.

Kemunto (2021) in the study on factors influencing recruitment strategies employed by small businesses in Kitale municipality, sought to establish the factors that influence the recruitment strategies which were employed by small businesses in Kitale municipality. A sample population of 33 businesses partook in the study. The study's findings exhibited that the majority of the small businesses in Kitale municipality use internal sources of hiring such as promotion and referrals. The outcome of the study further specified that culture, economic conditions, size, financial position of a business, corporate strategy, social influences, technological advancements and government/legal frameworks influence the choice of recruitment strategies by small businesses in Kitale, but to varying levels.

Omolo, Oginda and Oso, (2021) in their study entitled *The Effects of Recruitment and Selection of Employees on the Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Kisumu Municipality, Kenya* revealed that a total of 168 new small enterprises were registered by the beginning of 2009 Kisumu Municipal Office 2010, but by the

beginning of the year 2012, the number had reduced to 123. The majority of SMEs in Kisumu Municipality do not develop to full maturity.

The Transition Authority (T.A) is an organ of government in the devolution process tasked with identifying achievements, challenges and ways for better service quality. Key to the devolution process is the transfer of human resources functions from the central government to the county governments. Since the adoption of a devolved system of government was enacted in Kenya in the year 2010, the TA has reported on the status of HR devolution every year. In the year 2015, the report by the transition authority indicates various achievements, challenges and lessons learned for better service delivery. The effect of devolved HR functions on employee performance forms part of the Service quality at the county which forms the focus of my study, (Transition Authority Report 2015).

Hiring a practice will be selected due to the critical role they play in influencing employee performance in the workplace (PSC 2016). Research studies have produced compelling evidence that relates human resource functions to performance. Key to this function are; recruitment and selection. These functions form part of the matching model of human resource management (Collins & Druten 2003). In this study, independent variables will be measured in terms of county human resource strategy, county policy on attrition and turnover and county human resource needs while employee performance was measured in terms of expected behaviour and task-related aspects. After the transfer of management of human resources for devolved functions was affected in January 2014, several challenges have been observed which include: Discrimination, nepotism, tribalism, cronyism patronage, and victimization in the recruitment of county staff. These challenges are a result of unprofessional HR

practices at the county governments that are related to recruitment and selection (Transition Authority Report, 2015).

Recruitment and hiring practices follow policies, needs and strategies of the county governments as recommended by transition reports to curd unprofessionalism, (Transition Authority Report 2015). The County Governments have had a huge labour workforce as a result of hiring new staff without consulting the relevant departments at national or central government offices. While some investigations have been initiated in different countries, the available literature highlights that most of the studies examining the relationship between HRMP and performance have been conducted on organizational performance mostly in developed countries. Despite gains, the extent of benefits regarding the effect they have on employee performance in Government is yet to be examined. This research therefore aims at filling the gap by evaluating the role of hiring practices on Service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County government hence there is no statistically significant influence of hiring practices on Service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County

2.5.2 Effect of Performance Evaluation on Service Quality

Performance evaluation serves as a crucial mechanism in organizations for assessing employee performance, providing feedback, and guiding performance improvement. In the service industry, where service quality is paramount for customer satisfaction and loyalty, understanding the impact of performance evaluation on service quality is of significant importance. This literature review aims to synthesize existing research to explore the multifaceted relationship between performance evaluation practices and service quality outcomes. It delves into various concepts such as feedback,

motivation, training, and fairness, and presents empirical findings that shed light on the complex dynamics at play.

Numerous empirical studies have examined the relationship between performance evaluation and service quality, revealing intriguing insights. For instance, Jameson and Roberts (2019) conducted a survey-based study in the hospitality sector and found that performance evaluations with constructive feedback positively correlated with higher levels of service quality among employees. This finding underscores the importance of feedback in performance evaluation as a driver for enhancing service quality outcomes.

Additionally, a longitudinal study by Miller et al. (2020) in the healthcare industry revealed that performance evaluation coupled with targeted training programs led to significant improvements in service quality indicators. The findings suggest that performance evaluation when integrated with targeted training initiatives, has the potential to enhance the competencies and skills required for delivering high-quality service. Moreover, a study by Lee and Peterson (2021) in the retail sector examined the role of motivation in the performance evaluation-service quality relationship. Their findings indicated that performance evaluations that recognized and rewarded exceptional service performance motivated employees to maintain a high level of service quality. This highlights the importance of aligning performance evaluation practices with intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors to optimize service quality outcomes.

Reynolds and Thompson (2022) conducted a study in the financial services sector to examine the impact of performance evaluation feedback on service quality. Through surveys and interviews, data were collected from 400 employees. The findings

revealed a positive relationship between the quality of feedback received during performance evaluations and subsequent service quality outcomes. Employees who received constructive and specific feedback were more likely to improve their service quality performance. The study emphasizes the importance of providing high-quality feedback in performance evaluations to enhance service quality in the financial services sector.

Carter and Simmons (2022) conducted a longitudinal study in the hospitality industry to investigate the role of training as a mediator in the performance evaluation-service quality relationship. Data were collected from 300 employees over two years. The findings indicated that performance evaluations coupled with targeted training interventions significantly improved employees' service quality performance. The study revealed that training played a mediating role, as it enhanced employees' skills and competencies, thereby facilitating the translation of performance evaluation feedback into improved service quality outcomes. This highlights the importance of integrating training programs into performance evaluation processes to optimize service quality in the hospitality industry.

Davis and Mitchell (2022) conducted a study in the retail sector to examine the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the performance evaluation-service quality relationship. Through surveys and observations, data were collected from 250 retail employees. The findings revealed that performance evaluations that recognized and rewarded exceptional service performance positively influenced both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among employees. Employees who felt valued and appreciated for their service efforts demonstrated higher levels of service quality. The study

highlights the significance of aligning performance evaluation practices with motivational factors to enhance service quality outcomes in the retail sector.

2.5.3 Effect of Competence Development on Service Quality

Competence development assists employees in attaining new skills to execute their duties to accomplish organizational goals (Drejer, 2018). Competence involves the collaboration of formal (technology, human beings, organizational) and informal (cultural) elements. Little effort has been dedicated to the concept of competence development despite its critical role in improving organizational competitiveness. Competence development is a SHRM practice that aims to help employees with career progression by imparting knowledge and transferable skills (Armstrong, 2018).

According to Draganidis and Mentzas (2019), Competency management is an exercise that has become more and more significant in both private and public organizations, helping them to entice and develop talented employees, pinpoint the right person for a right job, perform succession planning, training analysis and other main Human Resource functions. In the public sector, competency management entails a new way of looking at careers. Hondeghem, Horton and Scheepers (2019) noted that Traditional public sector careers are founded on qualifications, exams and superiority, while the introduction of competencies puts a weight on the 'assets' people have for the organization. Today, competency management is an actual tendency in the public sector.

Competency management initially appeared as a concept in the private sector in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) in the 1980s (Hondeghem et al. 2019). Regardless of similar developments in competency management, there are different opinions underlying the US and UK approaches to competency (Horton,

2018; Lodge & Hood, 2019). The elementary variance between the US and UK approaches is the US search for 'excellence' and the exceptional compared to the UK's systematic identification of the skills needed to perform according to a set standard of work. This has been pronounced as the differentiation between superior and less effective performance, or the difference between drivers of performance and standards of work. Although this distinction is clear-cut, differences between both approaches became blurred during the 2000s (Horton, 2018; Lodge and Hood, 2019).

Different jurisdictions approach competence development in various ways, The USA has established an input-oriented competence framework that directs schools in promoting a culture of self-managed learning, planning and development using a training guide that stipulates competencies that are anticipated to be applicable in several work frameworks (Nansubuga, Munene & Ntayi, 2015). The UK uses an outcome-oriented competence framework encompassing standards that guide training, assessment and accreditation of employees while Australia practices a joint output- and outcome-oriented competence framework comprising standardized competencies required of an employee at the workplace.

As variants of New Public Management spread throughout Europe and the OECD countries, HRM and competency management became thought in good currency (Hondeghe et al., 2019). A 2018 study of competency management in the public sector (Horton et al., 2018), however, discovered that at the end of the 20th century, it was not yet a universal practice even in countries, such as the UK, which had led the way. Horwitz (2020) opined that the scarcity of skills is a danger to economic progression and further argued that retention strategies are crucial in a global market that is challenged with the deficiency of skilled workers, the skills scarcity shortfall is

not a South African phenomenon alone. It is consequently significant for business, government public and private sector leaders to address this crucial section of employee retention for competitiveness in the Service quality as Staff retention is essential. Moseley et al. (2020) opined that employee retention is critical to organizations, as increased turnover creates wavering and positions additional workload and stress on remaining staff, increasing job discontent and therefore potentiating the turnover cycle.

Current tendencies also show that employees currently have an aspiration to obtain fresh skills, predominantly technical skills, since the acquisition of skills provides job security compared to seniority (Chaminade, 2019). As a consequence, employees peep for organizations that are willing to offer them some training and development opportunities. This can be in the form of bursaries for job training and constant development opportunities. This results in affective commitment because the employees sharply identify with the organization if their personal goals are being met by the organization (Coetzee & Schreuder 2015), this affective commitment often urges employees to stay with the organization. Therefore, it is very significant for any organization to provide its employees with adequate training and keep trail of their level of job satisfaction.

According to Horwitz (2020), skills deficiencies are a menace to economic growth, they further argued that retention strategies are crucial in an international market that has experienced a low number of trained employees. The setback of skills shortage is not a South African phenomenon alone. It is, therefore, important for business, government, public and private sector leaders to address this critical component of employee retention for competitiveness and Service quality. In another study

conducted to examine whether the process of reflection provides for a stronger association between explicit competencies and role clarity among 223 managers in the Ugandan public sector, Nansubuga and Munene (2021), they were determined that systematic reflection on competencies benefits managers to explicitly articulate their competences for enhanced performance.

The European Commission, likewise, has established a framework comprising a single set of benchmarks for approving outcome-oriented competence standards in an agreed occupation across nations (Nansubuga et al. 2015), while the Ministry of Public Service of Uganda has approved concepts from Canada to create a competence dictionary comprising 18 generic behavioural (traits and attitudes expected of an employee) and 16 generic technical competencies (knowledge and skills) that would model all public workers in their operations (Nansubuga et al., 2015).

To continuously re-examine the accuracy of managers' competencies for optimal organizational performance. This is achievable with a paradigm swing from the current status where organizations only rely on the recognized competencies taught in institutions to the adoption of reflection and operant competencies strategy, which entails the creation of self-conception among employees to unlearn some of their favourite behaviours that are no longer relevant to the operational background in order ensure one's job success (Nansubuga et al., 2015).

According to Wallen, Tina, Skinner, Hall, Greema and Coonbes (2016), Training is governed in two ways: on-the-job training, where employees are trained while at their place of work. This is an easier and cost-effective way of training. Both employees that are not capable and those that were proficient can be trained using this method. The technique embraced learning by doing. For instance, it could be done through job

rotation, job enlargement and coaching. Off-the-job training is another method where employees are provided with training away from their workplace in the form of, For example, seminars, workshops and conferences. The method was costly to an organization, but when training a large number of employees, it was cost-effective.

According to Denby (2020), Strategic training ensures that there is professional faculty mandatory to effectively implement a strategy of growth in an organization. It is the processes that enable people to procure new information acquire emerging skills and improve on completion of tasks. It helps an organization craft a labour force capable of handling transformation, conforming to the growing clients' demands and fixing its prospective leadership. Employees are enabled to maintain standards and improve their competence which leads to increased performance.

(Hall et al., 2021) opined that one of the focal goals of strategic training programs is to build solid, competent and qualified personnel whose work performance could be sensed in both private and public sectors. The foundation of any organization is its human capital; therefore the strength or weakness of the capital is reflected in their performance at the workplace. According to Magiri (2020) improving public service and the quality of its delivered services is specifically contingent on the effectiveness of strategic training programs and the specificity that were provided to its employees. The benefits of the use of SHRM, the case of strategic training on employee performance are also strengthened by work on learning organizations as argued (Magiri, 2020).

According to Ngeno (2022), improving employees' skills and knowledge places them in an enhanced position to generate high-quality products and services most cost-effectively, they adapt to change and it increases their contribution to their work

through product or process innovation. Employees who are prepared for increased responsibilities, see value in strategic training as it helps them progress in their careers and enhances their capacity for continuous improvement.

According to Ivancevic et al. (2019), managing workers tactically requires administrators to oblige time, cash and devotion to train and develop the whole staff. Thus, strategic training practice is a necessary precondition for the empowerment of employees to work. Equally, investing in the training and development of employees would be of inadequate advantage if their jobs and roles are structured in such a way as to negate the opportunity to put their knowledge and skills into practice. This is what made empowerment very significant.

According to Nankervis, Chatterjee, and Coffey, (2019) noted that strategic training not only prepares employees with most of the knowledge and skills required to complete jobs but also assists them in accomplishing overall organization goals by contributing to the satisfaction and productivity of the employee and the organization at large. Waiganjo, Mukulu, and Kahiri (2021), opined that extensive training captures the creativity of employees and increases their skills. Training needs and how they were assessed, coupled with the criteria for selection and types of training like orientation, job training and career development were also implemented. The study also found that formal training in comparison with informal training was more effective and significantly associated with employee performance.

According to Denby (2020), strategic training is a constant endless process, one that is constantly refreshed and renewed according to the needs and requirements of the individuals. Therefore the organizations are encouraged to revisit the contents after training. Accordingly, Amaoka (2021) the framework for redesigning the attitudes of

public organization employees must involve staff training and development. The scholar highlighted that traditionally, training programmes had a skill-based focus, but recent and current trends in customer-oriented Civil Service required attitudinal-focused training. This commanded the need for a strategic methodology for training to develop the capacity of public servants for the improvement of Service quality. This study established that the County Hospitals needed to invest in their employees to equip the general health workers and their administrative managers with the necessary skills to establish them to handle new responsibilities, develop skills for customer-oriented county hospital service, improve the standards of performance; adapt to new technology and new working techniques. The study also established that county hospitals had equipment like Cancer screening equipment, but staff to operate them were lacking. And the ones who were there were not adequately trained to operate them. It was also established that the inherited staff from the former county councils were ill-equipped and needed to go through skill training i.e. job training to adequately perform in their respective areas.

Public sector organizations introduce competency management for various reasons. Change seems to be a pertinent factor determining the need to realize competency management practices. Normally, competency management begins with a need or a problem. 21st-century challenges still include globalization but also entail the demand for a diverse workforce, financial crisis, an ageing workforce etc. These are macroeconomic factors which will further influence the need to revise traditional personnel management practices and evolve towards a competency-based system. The main reason for announcing competency management in the public sector appears to be a wider cultural and organizational reform. Governments usually initiate

competency management to provide leverage for change (Van Schaardenburgh & Van Beek, 2020).

According to Hondeghem et al. (2020), it was stated that over the last 20 years, public sector organizations throughout the world have been exposed to major restructuring and are likely to continue to change in the future. Competency management is believed to support this change process. More specifically, it is seen as leverage to change the traditional bureaucratic culture of a public organization into a flexible and more personalized organizational culture, the predominance of competency management in the public sector might also be caused by the swelling competition for skilled personnel within the private sector. The public sector therefore faces a similar burden as private businesses in their Human Resource practices.

Alternatively, the public sector may be copying private sector practices basically because competency management is fashionable (Brans & Hondeghem, 2019). Moreover, competencies provide a common language and understanding of the necessary and desirable behaviors required to realize organizational intents (Hondeghem et al. 2019; Vakola et al., 2019). Finally, competency management increases the employability of public servants and hence their productivity now and in the future (Horn, 2019). For the county governments to have it right and deliver their agenda they need to have in place the right people at the beginning and ensure their staff are employed based on their various competencies and not any other considerations if the devolution train has to reach its destination. While many studies have attempted to link poor Service quality to a lack of competencies among public servants because of poor development in career, this has called for the study to assess whether there is advancement even after training influence of these on employee

Service quality which can lead to organizational effectiveness. This study seeks to establish the role of competence development practices on Service quality hence there is no statistically significant influence of competency development on Service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County Government.

2.5.4 The Influence of Employee Engagement Initiatives on Service Quality

Employee engagement initiatives play a crucial role in shaping service quality within organizations. Several studies have examined the relationship between employee engagement and service quality, highlighting the positive impact of effective employee engagement strategies on enhancing service delivery and customer experiences. This section provides a review of the literature on this topic.

Employee engagement initiatives contribute to service quality by fostering a positive organizational culture that encourages employees to go above and beyond their basic job requirements. According to Smith and Wollons (2020), engaged employees tend to exhibit higher levels of motivation, commitment, and discretionary effort, which directly influence the quality of service interactions with customers. Engaged employees are more likely to provide personalized and attentive service, demonstrate empathy, and actively seek opportunities to address customer needs.

Research by Johnson and Reeder (2019) supports the idea that employee engagement initiatives positively affect service quality. They found that organizations that prioritize employee engagement through measures such as training and development programs, recognition schemes, and employee involvement practices tend to achieve higher service quality ratings from customers. Engaged employees have a better understanding of customer expectations, are more responsive to customer feedback, and are willing to go the extra mile to deliver exceptional service.

Additionally, a study by Chen et al. (2018) examined the impact of employee engagement on service quality in the healthcare sector. They found a significant positive relationship between employee engagement initiatives, such as teamwork, empowerment, communication, and patient satisfaction. Engaged healthcare employees were more likely to provide compassionate care, exhibit effective communication skills, and ensure a positive patient experience.

To further support the relationship between employee engagement initiatives and service quality, a meta-analysis conducted by Jones and Anderson (2021) reviewed multiple studies across various industries. Their findings indicated a consistent positive association between employee engagement and service quality outcomes, highlighting the significance of employee engagement initiatives in improving overall service delivery. The existing literature suggests a strong link between employee engagement initiatives and service quality. Engaged employees tend to deliver higher levels of service quality by demonstrating commitment, motivation, and a customer-centric approach. Organizations that invest in employee engagement strategies, such as training programs, recognition schemes, and fostering a positive organizational culture, are more likely to achieve improved service quality and customer satisfaction.

This mixed-methods study, conducted by Anderson and Patel (2022), aimed to explore the relationship between employee engagement initiatives and service quality. A sample of 250 employees from various service-oriented organizations participated in the survey and in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 participants. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between employee engagement initiatives and service quality. Engaged employees demonstrated higher levels of commitment, enthusiasm, and customer-oriented behaviour, leading to enhanced

service quality outcomes. The qualitative insights provided further understanding of specific engagement practices that positively influenced service quality. The study underscores the significance of implementing effective employee engagement initiatives to improve service quality, emphasizing strategies such as clear communication, empowerment, and recognition to foster employee engagement.

Conducted over two years, Thompson and Lewis (2022) carried out a longitudinal analysis to examine the relationship between employee engagement and service quality in the retail sector. The study involved a sample of 500 employees from various retail organizations. Employee engagement levels were measured annually using validated surveys, and mystery shopper assessments were conducted to evaluate service quality. The analysis, using trend analysis and statistical tests, demonstrated a significant positive correlation between employee engagement and service quality. Maintaining high levels of employee engagement over time was found to be crucial for sustaining service quality excellence in the retail sector. The study recommended that retail organizations focus on initiatives such as regular communication, employee development programs, and recognition to nurture and enhance employee engagement levels, thereby ensuring sustained service quality and customer satisfaction.

In their quantitative study, Roberts and Lee (2022) examined the association between employee engagement and service quality in the hospitality industry. The study involved 400 employees working in the hospitality sector. The survey measured employee engagement levels and customer perceptions of service quality. Statistical analysis, including regression analysis, was conducted to examine the relationship between employee engagement and service quality. The findings indicated a strong positive association between employee engagement and service quality. Engaged

employees were more likely to deliver personalized and proactive service, resulting in higher customer satisfaction ratings. The study also highlighted specific dimensions of employee engagement, such as job satisfaction and organizational support, that significantly influenced service quality. The study highlights the importance of fostering employee engagement in the hospitality industry to achieve superior service quality outcomes.

In their field study, Brown and Davis (2022) examined the influence of leadership practices on employee engagement and subsequent service quality outcomes in the financial services sector. Through surveys and performance evaluations, data were collected from 300 employees. Structural equation modelling analysis indicated a significant positive association between transformational leadership, employee engagement, and service quality. Transformational leaders positively influenced employee engagement, resulting in improved service quality. The study highlights the importance of developing transformational leadership behaviours to foster employee engagement and enhance service quality in the financial services sector.

In this longitudinal study, Garcia and Hernandez (2022) investigated the relationships between employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and service quality in the healthcare industry. Over three years, surveys were administered to a sample of 400 healthcare professionals. The findings revealed a negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and service quality, with higher emotional exhaustion associated with lower service quality. However, employee engagement was found to mediate this relationship, mitigating the negative impact of emotional exhaustion on service quality. The study emphasizes the importance of managing employee

engagement and emotional exhaustion to enhance service quality in the healthcare sector.

Nguyen and Kim (2022) conducted a cross-sectional study to examine the relationship between employee voice and service quality in the retail industry. The study involved 250 frontline employees who completed surveys assessing employee voice and customer satisfaction ratings for service quality. The findings demonstrated a positive relationship between employee voice and service quality, indicating that employees who felt empowered to express their opinions and ideas contributed to improved service quality. Employee satisfaction was identified as a partial mediator in this relationship. The study underscores the importance of fostering a culture that encourages employee voice, participation, and open communication channels to drive service quality improvements in the retail industry.

2.5.5 Moderating Effect of Organizational Culture on the Relationship Between Strategic Human Resource Management Practices and Service Quality

According to Felipe, Roldán, and Leal-Rodriguez (2017), appreciation is an essential component of any business, and managers and employees should value one another to achieve long-term success. According to Harel, Schwartz, and Kaufmann (2020), trust is a vital and effective component of any organization. This indicates that the company would be able to establish a sustainable competitive advantage with a culture of trust and total authenticity.

According to Kawana et al. (2018), trust, dynamism, and a focus on overall performance are the main characteristics of a healthy corporate culture, which also includes performance and resilience. According to Kho et al. (2020), teamwork, which includes cooperation, communication, respect, and other related factors, can

assist in achieving better results. It is important to note that when a company's employees work as a cohesive unit, integrity prevails, allowing for joint decision-making, enhanced collaborations, and the potential for innovation and psychological safety.

A study by Abdulrahman and Garba (2019) looked into the impact of corporate entrepreneurship on organizational performance, particularly within the Dangote Group. With a sample size of more than 200 respondents, the descriptive survey research design was used. Using the Slovene method, the authors chose these 238 respondents from a pool of 592 management-related employees at the Dangote Group using the stratified-proportionate sample technique. The authors employed a closed-ended survey and distributed the results using the Likert scale. The conclusion of their analysis indicated that while taking risks and being innovative is not positively correlated with organizational success, being proactive can favourably and significantly impact an organization's performance, as is the case with Nigeria's Dangote Group. The authors' recommendation for organizational management's proactiveness while evaluating an improvement in the organizational performance of the Dangote Group is their conclusion.

Kaplan and Norton (2011) identified four non-causal relationships between performance management and culture, including learning progress, clients and internal business processes (from effective and successful human resource development activities), and financial compensation management systems, both of which enhance and establish causal relationships. The formation of a community and a strong partnership both contribute to an enterprise's competitive advantage. The organizational ethos aids in identifying the restrictions in the evaluation of results

(Rousseau, 2000). According to Brooks (2006), a positive organizational culture has a significant impact on how well a company performs on the job and helps to raise productivity, which in turn helps to improve results.

According to Warrick (2017), an organization's culture significantly influences how well a business performs. The performance of the company, the efficiency of its operations, employee morale and productivity, and an organization's capacity for luring, inspiring, and keeping talent are all said to be significantly impacted by its culture. Despite the significance of corporate culture, some leaders may be either oblivious to the profound influence of culture or are simply overburdened by the wealth of contradictory information on culture. Another option is that the leaders are not well-informed about the best ways to create and maintain cultures. The author has incorporated the overwhelmingly consistent findings that are important for leaders to be aware of in terms of culture so that they can understand how powerful and effective organizational culture can be established to maximize the potential of employees. According to the authors, leaders must understand how crucial it is to integrate organizational strategy and decision-making processes into organizational culture development. This study will use organizational culture as a moderator to find out the role it plays in employee Service quality in County Government therefore there is no statistically significant moderating role of organizational culture on the relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management Practices and Service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework refers to a graphical representation of the theorized interrelationships of the variables of a study (Odhiambo & Waiganjo, 2022). The

conceptualization of variables in academic study is important because it forms the basis for testing hypotheses and coming up with generalizations in the findings of the study (Pickard, 2021). In this study, the independent variables are the conceptualized Strategic Human Resource Management Practices in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The independent variables of the study included hiring practices, performance evaluation, Employee engagement initiatives and competency development.

The moderating variable will be the organizational culture and the dependent variable will be Service quality. In this study, Objective Factor Theory depicts that the hiring choice is subjected to the objective examination of certain touchable components that exist within the Organization where these factors as pronounced by the theory encompass: the size of the organization, pay of the employees in the organization, Benefits policies and practices, organizational image structure, organizational culture, location, educational and training opportunities for Employee engagement initiatives, nature of work to be undertaken among others. In the Human resource management (HRM) discipline, the theory (Objective factor theory), has been adopted extensively to potentially explain the complex relationship between how people are managed in organizations and subsequent performance outcomes (Service quality). A commonly accepted view is that deed the human resource practices and good organizational culture are some of the many activities the organizations need to observe for the betterment of Service quality and these are what this study would like to investigate.

This study also employs The Employee-based Service Quality (EBSQ) model which is based on the hope disconfirmation worldview, which in terms implies that service quality is comprehended as the degree to which employees' pre-utilization desires for quality is affirmed or disconfirmed by their genuine impression of the service

involvement. The analytic estimation of the instrument is upheld by the model of service quality which shapes the theoretical system for the advancement of the scale (for example instrument or survey). The instrument has been broadly connected in an assortment of settings and social settings and observed to be generally hearty.

Lastly, human capital theory is used in the study, Human capital theory originated in the mid-20th century work of Mincer (1958), Schultz (1961), and Becker (1962). These authors proposed a remarkably simple explanation of personal income. The idea is that individuals can gain skills (human capital) that will make them more productive. This enhanced productivity then leads to greater income, this theory concurs with this study in that the competency development of an employee will enable him or her to get better job skills hence high productivity or efficient Service quality.

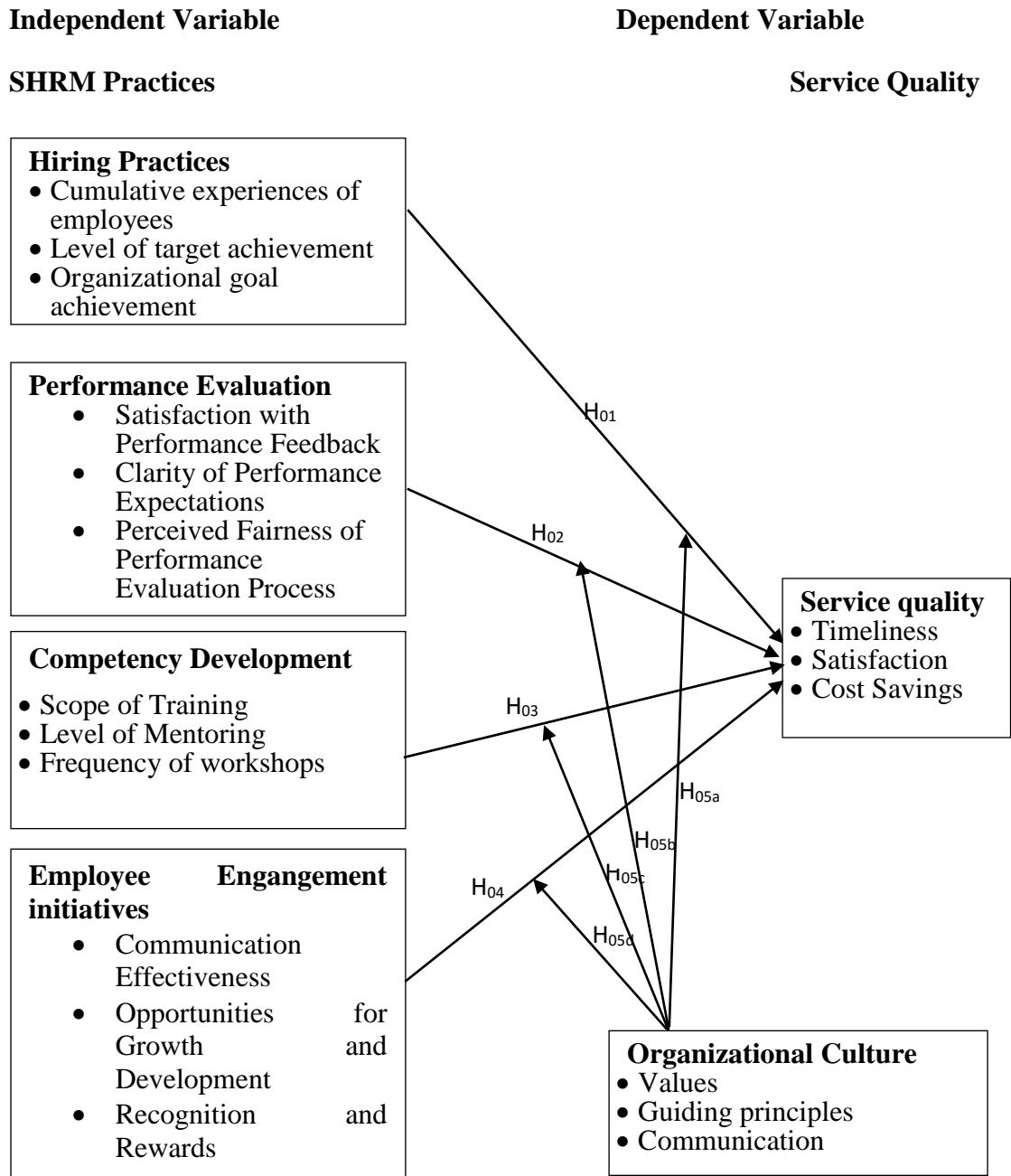


Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework

(Source: Researcher, 2024)

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the research design, study area, target population, sampling design and procedure, data collection and research instruments, measurement of variables, piloting, data analysis and ethics.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted an explanatory research design. Hypotheses were tested by measuring the relationships between variables, while data was analyzed using statistical techniques. The explanatory research design was suitable because the study was mainly concerned with quantifying a relationship or comparing groups purposely to identify a cause-effect relationship.

Explanatory survey research design advances the relationship among variables. This approach seeks to collect data to establish the effects of human resource management practices on service quality, which is moderated by organizational culture. According to Saunders *et al.*, (2021), studies that establish causal relationships between variables use explanatory design. Therefore, an explanatory research design was suitable for this study, as explained above. A major advantage of using explanatory research design is that it will enable the researcher to simultaneously answer confirmatory questions regarding the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between strategic human resource management practices and Service quality, through closed-ended questionnaires. The design is also deemed appropriate for such, as it allowed the study to be carried out in natural settings and allowed the researcher to employ probability samples. This allowed for statistical inferences to be made to the

broader populations and permit generalizations of findings to real-life situations, (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2020)

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted at Elgeyo Marakwet County. Elgeyo Marakwet County is geographically positioned in the Rift Valley region of Kenya. It is located in the western part of the country, bordered by West Pokot County to the north, Baringo County to the east, and Trans Nzoia County to the west. The southern boundary of Elgeyo Marakwet County is shared with Uasin Gishu County. The county was chosen because of its position as a vibrant and progressive county in Kenya, known for its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and commitment to sustainable development which can be realized through the county's efforts to tap into these opportunities. Through strategic planning, partnership with stakeholders, and effective implementation of development programs, the county is steadily progressing towards its vision of becoming a model county in Kenya.

3.3 Target Population

Tabachnick and Fidell (2021) observed that the target population refers to the reference population for which the researcher wishes to draw generalizations and from which the study population is drawn. The target population for the study consisted of individuals from different positions within the county's government structure. This included Chief Officers, Directors, Members of the Public Service Board, Human Resource Staff, Ward Administrators and permanent Staff. The Chief Officers, numbering 10 in total, hold senior positions and are responsible for overseeing the implementation of policies and programs within their respective

departments. They play a crucial role in ensuring effective governance and service delivery within the county.

The county also has 21 Directors who manage specific departments or divisions. These Directors are involved in decision-making processes, strategic planning, and resource allocation to ensure the smooth functioning of their respective departments. The Public Service Board consists of 11 members who play a vital role in overseeing human resource management matters. They are responsible for recruitment, promotions, and disciplinary processes within the county government, ensuring that the workforce is well-managed and aligned with the county's goals and objectives.

The Human Resource Staff, comprising 19 individuals, is responsible for managing the county's human resources. They handle various aspects such as recruitment, training and development, performance evaluation, and policy implementation. Their role is crucial in maintaining an efficient and productive workforce within the county government. Additionally, there are 25 Ward Administrators who act as intermediaries between the county government and the communities within their respective wards. They oversee the administration and service delivery at the ward level, ensuring that the needs and concerns of the local communities are addressed. The permanent staff totaling 158 are the members located in the county offices and are pensionable. This will help validate the responses provided.

The target population in Elgeyo Marakwet County consisted of key individuals from different departments and positions within the county government. These individuals collectively contribute to the effective implementation of strategic human resource management practices and the delivery of high-quality services to the residents of the county. Their knowledge, experiences, and involvement in HR management and

service delivery made them highly suitable for examining the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between strategic HR practices and service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. Their insights contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the topic and inform strategies for improving service quality in the county.

Table 3. 1: Target Population

Carder/department	Target population
Chief Officers	10
Directors	21
Members of the Public Service Board	11
Human Resource Staff	19
Ward administrators	25
Permanent Staff	158
Total	244

(Source: Elgeyo Marakwet County Government, HR Office, 2022)

3.4 Sampling and Sampling Procedure

A sample is often described as being representative of a certain known percentage, and frequency distributions of elements' characteristics within the sample are similar to the corresponding distributions within the whole population (Kasomo, 2019). Sampling is the process of selecting several individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals selected represent the larger group from which they were selected (Cooper & Schindler, 2019). The sample size and sampling procedure that was used in this study are discussed below.

3.4.1 Sample Frame

A sampling frame depicts the list of all population units from which the sample will be drawn (Cooper & Schindler, 2019). This indicates the distribution of the population from which a sample is drawn. In this study, the sampling frame was a list of 244 County government officials in all Elgeyo County Government. This included

Chief Officers, Directors, Members of the Public Service Board, Human Resource Staff, Ward Administrators and permanent staff at the county offices.

3.4.2 Sample Size

A sample is a portion or part of the population of interest. The purpose of sampling is to gain an understanding of some features or attributes of the whole population based on the characteristics of the sample. Sampling involves the drawing of a target population for observation. It is appropriate when it is not feasible to involve the entire population under study. Using Yamane's (1972) sample size formula at a 95% confidence level, $P = 0.5$, the sample size of employees will be computed as below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n = the sample size,

N = the population size,

e = the acceptance sampling error

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Given the following values:

N = 244 (population size)

e = 0.05 (acceptance sampling error)

Substitute these values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{244}{1 + 244(0.05)^2}$$

Calculating further:

$$n = \frac{244}{1 + 244(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{244}{1 + 0.61}$$

$$n = \frac{244}{1.61} \approx 151.55$$

Rounding up to the nearest whole number, the sample size for the study population of 244 would be approximately 152.

Table 3. 2: Sample Size

Carder/department	Target	Formula	Sample
Chief Officers	10	10 / 244* 152	6
Directors	21	21 / 244* 152	13
Members of the Public Service	11	11 / 244* 152	7
Human Resource	19	19 / 244* 152	12
Ward administrators	25	25 / 244* 152	16
Permanent Staff	158	158 / 244* 152	98
Total	244		152

(Source Author data, 2024)

3.4.3 Sampling Procedure

Sampling, the process of selecting specific items from a larger population, is essential in research. As described by Zikmund (2011), a sample is a representative group chosen to accurately reflect the true target demographic of a study. In this research, a stratified random sampling approach was employed. This involved dividing the target population into smaller strata and then selecting a proportionate random sample from each stratum. This method ensured objectivity, providing every Elgeyo Marakwet County employee with an equal opportunity to participate in the research. The use of stratified random sampling enhances the representativeness of the sample and

contributes to the reliability of the study's findings (Cozby, 2018). It was appropriate because the entire population is relatively large, diverse and sparsely distributed, hence stratified random sampling technique helped to achieve the desired objective. This technique was appropriate for the study as it is cost-effective and efficient in administration. The sampling technique gave each respondent in the population an equal probability of being included in the sample.

3.5 Data Collection and Research Instruments

3.5.1 Data Types and Sources (Primary and Secondary)

The main data type was the primary sources of data collection. Specifically, questionnaire was used in the study to collect data from the sampled respondents

3.5.2 Data Collection Instruments (Questionnaire)

Data collection was done through instruments developed by the researcher through the supervisor's instruction. The choice of data collection instrument is often decisive to the success of the research, and thus, when determining an appropriate data collection method, a researcher has to take into account the complexity of the topic, response rate, time and the targeted population (Mwangi, 2015). In this study, the data collection was through the use of questionnaires. Questionnaires are sets of questions that will give answers to the research participants in a set of ways. According to Kombo and Tromp (2019), a questionnaire is a research instrument that gathers data from a large sample. Most questionnaires are designed to gather already structured data and so include a set of answers that the respondent can choose from, although some may include more open-ended questions that allow the respondent to answer the questions in their own way; others give a provision where all the participants are

asked the same questions in the same order and using the same wording and have the same set of answers to choose from (Matthews & Ross 2020).

According to Kothari (2020), questionnaires are usually free from interview bias as the answers are in the respondent's own words. Respondents will have adequate time to give well-thought-out answers. Orodho (2019) also argues that a questionnaire is an efficient research tool that when used will enable the researcher to obtain personal ideas from a respondent. It had the advantage of obtaining standard responses to items, making it possible to compare between sets of data. It will also allow the participants to give their own opinions on the issue at stake (Matthews & Ross 2020). The questionnaire was designed to address specific objectives. The questionnaire was self-administered and had closed-ended items consistent with the requirements of the research design. Responses to closed-ended questions was elicited on a 5-point Likert scale with 1-signifying strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-moderately agree, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree. This technique was appropriate for the study since the instrument used quantitative hence an acceptable method (Makhamara, 2017).

3.5.3 Data Collection Procedure

In this study questionnaire was designed to address specific objectives. The questionnaire was self-administered and had closed-ended items, consistent with the requirements of the research design. Responses to closed-ended questions were elicited on a 5-point Likert scale with 1-signifying strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-moderately agree, 4-agree, and 5 strongly agree. This technique was appropriate for the study since the instrument was quantitative, hence an acceptable method. Before the actual data collection exercise, permission was sought from the National Commission for Science and Technology Innovation for a research permit. The

permit was then be presented to the county government, who gave the go-ahead. Data was collected using the questionnaire. Data was collected from employees by trained research assistants on behalf of the researcher using the drop-and-pick method under close supervision by the researcher. A period of 24 hrs was given for the employees to fill out the questionnaire, after which the filled questionnaire were picked.

3.6 Measurement of Variables

Variable	Variable Type	Measurement	Data Type	Mode of Analysis
Hiring Practices	Independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative experiences of employees • Level of target achievement • Organizational goal achievement 	Ordinal	Descriptive
Performance evaluation	Independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with Performance Feedback • Clarity of Performance Expectations • Perceived Fairness of Performance 	Ordinal	Descriptive
Competency Development	Independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of Training • Level of Mentoring • Frequency of workshops 	Ordinal	Descriptive
Employee Engagement initiatives	Independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Effectiveness • Opportunities for Growth and Development • Recognition and Rewards 	Ordinal	Descriptive
Service quality	Dependent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeliness • Satisfaction • Cost Savings 	Nominal	Regression Analysis
Organizational culture	Moderator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values • Guiding principles • Communication 	Nominal	Hierarchical Regression

3.7 Piloting

A total of 16 questionnaires was pilot-tested in Uasin Gishu county governments. Uasin Gishu County shares similarities with Elgeyo Marakwet County in terms of demographics, governance structure, or other relevant factors. Conducting the pilot study in a similar setting ensures that the findings are more applicable and transferable to the main study area (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2008). The purpose of the pilot study was to enable the researcher to ascertain the reliability and validity of the instruments, and to familiarize with the administration of the questionnaires and therefore improve the instruments and procedures. Appropriate corrections were made based on the results of the pilot study.

3.7.1 Validity

Validity is truthfulness and is a measure of how well a conceptualized idea about reality matches the actual reality (Bolarinwa, 2015). Validity was used to validate the quantitative instrument (questionnaire). Content validity, according to Bolarinwa (2015), is the judgment made based on a scientific approach on whether the indicator used measures the required construct. Content validity is the degree to which the instrument measures the required construct (Sangoseni, Hellman & Hill, 2021). Sangoseni *et al.*, (2021) contend that an instrument can only achieve content validity if it undergoes a rational analysis by raters (experts) who have familiarity with the academic scope of the study.

In this study, the predictive validity methodology was employed, integrating the use of Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) as the central analytical tool to ensure the robustness of the measurement items. Correlations of 0.8 between the four variables of the independent variable and the dependent variable provided strong

evidence of the validity of the measurement instrument used in the study. Correlation coefficients indicated the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. In this context, high correlation coefficients of 0.8 between the independent variables and the dependent variable signify that the measurement items designed to assess the independent variables are closely related to the changes observed in the dependent variable. When correlations are consistently high, such as at the 0.8 level, it suggests that the measurement items effectively capture the underlying constructs they intend to measure. A strong positive correlation of 0.8 implies that as values on the independent variables increase, there is a consistent and substantial increase in the values on the dependent variable. This alignment between the measurement items and the variables they are meant to assess indicates a high level of construct validity.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability is a measure of how dependable or consistent the instrument is in measuring the required construct (Bolarinwa, 2015). Reliability is the extent to which a measure produces similar results after repeated trials. The employees' questionnaire incorporated closed-ended questions to facilitate proper capturing and analysis of the variables of the study.

The reliability of the questionnaires was verified through an examination of the internal consistency of the measures. Reliability was computed on data collected after piloting the developed questionnaire among employees. Interpretation of the coefficients was based on the following threshold (Kinoti, 2021). To test the reliability of the instrument to be used in the study, the test-retest method was used.

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the research instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.7 and above is assumed to reflect the internal

reliability of the instruments (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2018). The entire questionnaire was deemed reliable after several typographical errors and omissions detected are corrected in the instrument confirming that it was sufficient to be used in the main study. Construct validity was achieved by anchoring the constructs to the theory from which they were derived. This is noted by Zohrabi (2021) and relates to the fairness, balance and honesty exhibited by respondents on topical issues.

3.8 Data Analysis

After all, the data has been collected, the researcher conducted data cleaning, which involved the identification of incomplete or inaccurate responses and then correcting them to improve the quality of the responses. The quantitative data was coded and keyed into SPSS V.22 computer software and then analyzed.

3.8.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics is the term given to the analysis of data that helps describe, show or summarize data in a meaningful way such that, for example, patterns might emerge from the data. Descriptive statistics, therefore, enabled the researcher to present the data in a more meaningful way, which allowed a simpler interpretation of the data. Descriptive statistics included analyzing data using measures of central tendency including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for all the items in the questionnaire.

3.8.2 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics to assess the relationship between the variables was conducted. Specifically, correlation and hierarchical Multiple Regression results was undertaken.

3.9 Model Specification

To determine the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable as captured by the null hypotheses, this study conducted inferential statistics through hierarchical multiple regression analysis. In addition, moderated hierarchical multiple regression models was used to establish the direction and the magnitude of the effect of the moderator variable, on each of the independent variables and the total effect of the moderator variable on the dependent variable H06 (Wagana 2017). The models were undertaken as follows: The study will first determined the relationship between the independent, moderating and dependent variables through hierarchical regression.

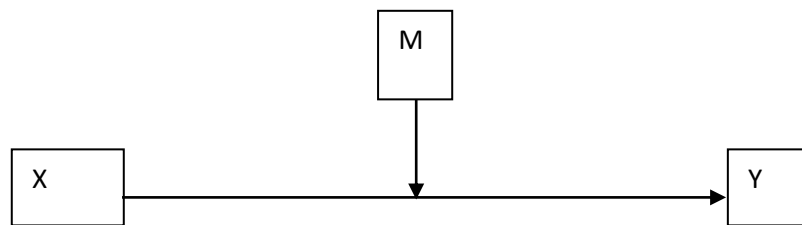


Figure 3. 1: Conceptual Diagram

Source: Hayes model I (2013)

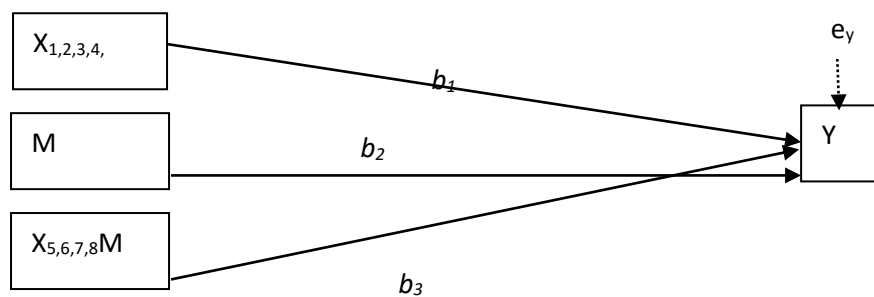


Figure 3. 2: Statistical Diagram

Source: Hayes model II (2013)

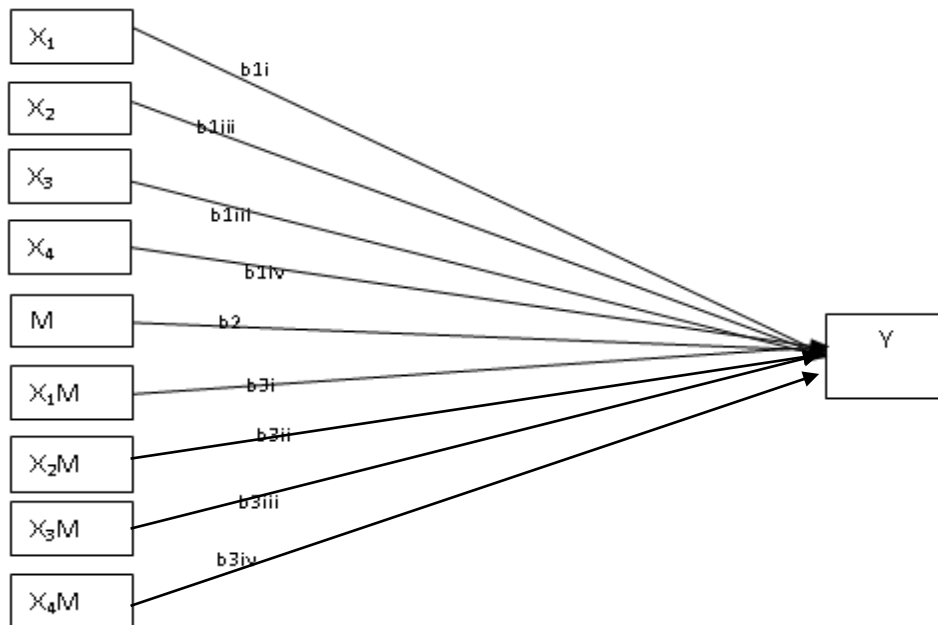


Figure 3. 3: Statistical Diagram for Moderation

Source: (Hayes III, 2013)

Hierarchical Regression

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + C + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + C + \beta_{1it}X_1 + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \beta_3 X_{3it} + \beta_4 X_{4it} + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + C + \beta_1X_{1it} + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \beta_3 X_{3it} + \beta_4 X_{4it} + \beta_5M_{it} + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots(3)$$

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + C + \beta_1X_{1it} + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \beta_3 X_{3it} + \beta_4 X_{4it} + \beta_5M_{it} + \beta_6 X_1 * M_{it} + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots(4)$$

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + C + \beta_1X_{1it} + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \beta_3 X_{3it} + \beta_4 X_{4it} + \beta_5M_{it} + \beta_6 X_1 * M_{it} + \beta_7 X_2 * M_{it} + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots(5)$$

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + C + \beta_1X_{1it} + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \beta_3X_{3it} + \beta_4X_{4it} + \beta_5M_{it} + \beta_6X_1 * M_{it} + \beta_7X_2 * M_{it} + \beta_8 X_3 * M_{it} + \dots\dots\dots (6)$$

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + C + \beta_1X_{1it} + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \beta_3X_{3it} + \beta_4X_{4it} + \beta_5M_{it} + \beta_6X_1 * M_{it} + \beta_7X_2 * M_{it} + \beta_8 X_3 * M_{it} + \beta_9X_4 * M_{it} + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots(7)$$

Where:

Y: Represent: Service quality

X: Represent: Strategic Human Resource Management Practices

X_1 : Represent: Hiring practices

X_2 : Represent: Performance evaluation

X_3 : Represent: Competency development

X_4 : Represent: Employee engagement initiatives

M = Moderator variable (Organizational culture) that affects the relationship of X and Y

β_0 : Represent: Constant

$\beta_1 - \beta_8$: Represent: Regression coefficients

μ_i : Represent: Error term

B_6X_5 (X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4): Represent: Interaction term

A hierarchical regression model was employed to analyze the unique contribution of each set of predictor variables in predicting the dependent variable, sequentially adding them based on their theoretical or practical importance, allowing for a nuanced understanding of their impact.

3.10 Assumptions of Multiple Regressions

The assumptions of the hierarchical regression model identified as of primary concern in the research include; linearity, homoscedasticity, normality, and collinearity. Normality assumption is based on the shape of normal distribution and gives the researcher knowledge about what values to expect (Keith, 2019). The researcher tested this assumption using visual inspection of data plots, skewness, kurtosis, and P-Plots (Osborne & Waters, 2018). Normality was further checked through histograms of the standardized residuals.

Linearity was established using multiple regressions to estimate the relationship between dependent and independent variables when the relationship is linear

(Osborne & Waters, 2018). Examination of the residual plots showing the standardized residuals vs. the predicted values is useful in detecting violations in linearity (Stevens, 2020). Residual plots showing the standardized residuals and the predicted values was used to establish linearity.

The assumption of homoscedasticity refers to an equal variance of errors across all levels of the independent variables (Osborne & Waters, 2018). This means that the study assumed that errors are spread out consistently between the variables (Keith, 2019). Homoscedasticity was checked using the standardized residual scatter plot. The results showed whether standardized residuals were concentrated in the Centre (around 0) and whether their distribution was rectangular. Independence: Observations are independent of each other. Multicollinearity occurs when several independent variables correlate at high levels with one another, or when one independent variable is a near-linear combination of other independent variables (Keith, 2019). Tolerance and VIF statistics were used to carry out the diagnosis (Keith, 2019).

A multiple linear regression model was adopted to study the linear relationships among the various variables under study. A multiple linear regression analysis is a multivariate statistical technique used to estimate the model parameters and determine the effect of individual independent variables (IVs) on the dependent variable (DV). A multivariate analytical approach was appropriate for this study because the conceptual model uses four indicators/measures for Strategic Human Resource Management Practices (independent variables) and organizational culture (moderating variable) to predict Service quality outcome (dependent variable).

3.11 Ethical Considerations

The researcher explained to the respondents the purpose of the study and all the respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the information they gave. In addition, the researcher obtained a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) to conduct the study. All the study findings were communicated to the stakeholders. The researcher took the responsibility to only collect and analyze the data required to fulfil the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the quantitative findings in line with the objectives and hypotheses provided in Chapter One. The demographic characteristics, direct relationships and moderation results of the research variables are provided in the subsequent sections.

4.1 Data Processing and Screening

Data processing entailed cleaning and converting the collected data (Silverman, 2018). According to a scholarly proposal (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), data quality and integrity were maintained by filtering survey data for a variety of potential issues connected to missing data. Following receipt of completed questionnaires, data was categorized and analyzed in SPSS. All received questionnaires were number-tagged for simple follow-up (Dennis, 2020). To ensure accuracy and completeness, data submission was subjected to careful and detailed verification for inconsistencies, missing retorts, and other errors. Double-checking ensured that blank questionnaires or those with missing data were removed, resulting in more robust analysis (Kupzyk & Cohen, 2015; Chu, Ilysa, Krishnan & Wang, 2016).

4.2 Response Rate

All 152 administered questionnaires were returned. This entailed a 100 per cent response rate. This high response rate can be attributed to the researcher's involvement in distributing and collecting the questionnaires. The high response rate offered enough data to generalize the relationship between organizational culture,

strategic human resource strategies, and service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. A high response rate improves survey data quality (Roberts, Vandenplas, & Herzing, 2020), allowing inferential analysis to produce accurate results.

4.3 Missing Data

Missing data is a typical problem in questionnaire-based investigations. (Tsiampalis & Panagiotakos, 2020). Missing data poses the challenge of reducing the statistical power of the sample size, increasing the risk of biased results and overestimating or underestimating standard errors (Curley, Krause, Feiock & Hawkins, 2019), biasing inferences about the reference population (Tsiampalis & Panagiotakos, 2020). Researchers recommend strategies to manage missing data and minimize their direct negative impact on practice (Curley et al., 2019).

To avoid having to replace missing data fields, the researcher/research assistant focused on omitted items by asking respondents to properly complete the questionnaire (Bonds, 2017). Additionally, only complete surveys with observed values were subjected to additional rigorous analysis (Kalkan, Yusuf, & Kelecioğlu, 2018). Here, descriptive analytics checked for possible data entry errors, allowing for immediate correction. Through this, checking for consistency and handling missing data ensures that this does not significantly affect the results of data analysis (Larkins-Perkins, 2017).

Table 4. 1: Returned Questionnaires

Response	No. of Questionnaires	Percentage (%)
Usable responses	152	100%
Non responses	0	0%
Total	152	100%

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.4 Analysis of Outliers

Multiple regression is very sensitive to suspicious observations with high or low scores (Filzmoser, Ruiz-Gazen, & Thomas-Agnan, 2014). These observations or measures are significantly lower or greater than the vast majority of observations, which contradicts the premise of normalcy (Ude, 2015). Diagnosing outliers is a critical step in multivariate data analysis (Abonazel, 2019) since failing to do so alters the statistical analysis and produces conclusions that do not generalize to the sample. In this thesis, no outliers were found.

4.5 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.2 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents from the valid data. This was then used to conduct the analysis and draw conclusions from the test of the study hypotheses. The sample characteristics include the respondents' gender, age, education and tenure.

Table 4. 2: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic characteristics	Attributes	Number of respondents	Percentage responses
Gender	Female	72	47.4
	Male	80	52.6
	Total	152	100.0
Age	21-30 Years	51	33.6
	31-40 Years	54	35.5
	41-50 Years	39	25.7
	51 – 60	7	4.6
	61 Years and Above	1	.7
	Total	152	100.0
Education	Secondary	3	2.0
	Certificate	14	9.2
	Diploma	50	32.9
	University	69	45.4
	Postgraduate	16	10.5
	Total	152	100.0
Tenure	Below 5 years	66	43.4
	6 – 10 years	57	37.5
	11 – 15 years	22	14.5
	16 – 20 years	4	2.6
	21 years and above	3	2.0
	Total	152	100.0

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.5.1 Gender

According to Table 4:2, 47.4% of respondents were female and 52.6% were male. This means that in the sample population, nearly half of the respondents were identified as female, while slightly more than half, were identified as male. This means that there is a gender balance within the county Government.

4.5.2 Age

According to Table 4:2, 0.7% of respondents who are senior members were 61 Years and Above. The majority of respondents (35.5%) were aged between 31 and 40 Years. Others (33.6%) were aged between 21 and 30 Years, and 41-50 Years account for 25.7% of the overall sample. Those aged between 51 and 60 were 4.6%. This means that the county government has a dynamic staff who can carry out their mandate. This also suggests that individuals in the age bracket of 20 and 40 years are active and passionate about carrying out their duties, that's why they constitute almost 70% of the employees.

4.5.3 Educational

From Table 4:2. The analyzed sample includes five educational levels: secondary, certificate, diploma, university, and postgraduate. Almost half of the respondents had a university degree (45.4%), a diploma (32.9%), or a postgraduate degree (10.5%). Certificate holders made up 9.2% of the total, while secondary certificate holders made up only 2.0%. These figures reflect the typical requirements for employment in any organization. Equally, valid results rely on respondents' ability to comprehend questionnaires and provide objective responses.

4.5.4 Tenure

Table 4:2 of tenure shows that the majority of the respondents have served the county government for below 5 years (43.4%) followed by 6-10 years (37.5%) and 11-15 years (14.5%). The remaining sample had worked 16-20 years (2.6%) and 21 years and above (2.0%) respectively. This suggests that the employees have relevant experience to provide information about the county government regarding organizational culture, strategic human resource practices and service quality.

4.6 Independent sample t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

T-test is used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of two groups and how they are related. ANOVA on the other hand establishes the relationship between two or more samples (Kim, 2014) to determine if there was a mean difference between the respondents' demographic characteristics in the study area with the study variables.

4.6.1 Independent sample T-test for Gender

The findings using Levene's test showed no significant difference between male and female respondents on the relationship between Service Quality, hiring practices, performance evaluation, competency development, employee engagement and organizational culture: $t=.444$, $F=.007$, $df=150$ with $sig.=.933$; $t=-.663$, $F=.279$, $df=150$ with $sig.=.598$; $t=.172$, $F=.116$, $df=150$ with $sig.=.733$; $t=-.694$, $F=2.163$, $df=150$ with $sig.=.143$; $t=-.292$, $F=.473$, $df=150$ with $sig.=.493$; $t=-.240$, $F=.003$, $df=150$ with $sig.=.959$ respectively as indicated in table 4.3. The null hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between the means of gender distribution regarding Service Quality, hiring practices, performance evaluation, competency development, employee engagement and organizational culture. The alternative

hypothesis suggests that there is a significant difference. Since the p-value is greater than the significance value (0.05) then it suggests that there is strong evidence to fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 4. 3: Independent sample t-test for gender

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				
		F	Sig.	t	Df
Service Quality	Equal variances assumed	.007	.933	-.444	150
	Equal variances not assumed			-.444	147.270
Hiring Practices	Equal variances assumed	.279	.598	-.663	150
	Equal variances not assumed			-.663	148.700
Performance Evaluation	Equal variances assumed	.116	.733	.172	150
	Equal variances not assumed			.172	149.470
Competency Development	Equal variances assumed	2.163	.143	-.694	150
	Equal variances not assumed			-.703	146.803
Employee Engagement	Equal variances assumed	.473	.493	-.292	150
	Equal variances not assumed			-.291	146.054
Organizational Culture	Equal variances assumed	.003	.959	-.240	150
	Equal variances not assumed			-.241	149.631

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.6.2 Analysis of variance for age group

The analysis of the age groups of county staff shows significant differences related to the study variables. There was no significant difference between age and service quality ($F = 2.106$, $p < .05$). This suggests that regardless of age, individuals were likely to provide similar levels of service quality. The lack of a significant difference between age and service quality could have various implications. It may indicate that factors other than age play a more crucial role in determining service quality. For instance, training, experience, organizational policies, and individual attitudes towards customer service could be more influential in shaping the quality of service provided.

Additionally, age was significantly related to hiring practices ($F = 3.250$, $p < .05$). The study conducted by David Neumark, Ian Burn, and Patrick Button found that age differences in hiring practices are a significant issue in the U.S. workplace. The

research involved creating job applicant profiles and measuring the callback rates for interviews based on age groups. The results showed that older applicants consistently received lower callback rates compared to younger applicants, indicating a clear pattern of age discrimination. Specifically, older female applicants (ages 64 to 66) for administrative assistant and sales positions experienced a 47% and 36% lower callback rate, respectively, than their younger counterparts (ages 29 to 31).

There were also significant differences between age and performance evaluation ($F = 1.044, p < .05$). The study by Czaja et al. (2001) focused on a simulated real-world task typical of those performed by customer service representatives. They found significant age differences in task performance across different measures, with exceptions noted for navigational efficiency and the number of problems correctly navigated per attempt. The study also highlighted the impact of task experience on performance and identified relationships between cognitive abilities and task performance.

There was no significant difference between competency development and age ($F = .280, p > .05$). This implies age does not impact county staff's beliefs in their capabilities. Competency development is primarily driven by an individual's experiences, skills, knowledge, and personal growth rather than their age. While age can bring about certain experiences and perspectives, it does not directly determine one's competency level or potential for growth.

There was no significant difference between age and employee engagement ($F = 1.847, p > .05$). In a study conducted to determine if different types of employees find any engagement drivers to be more or less important, it was found that there was no significant difference between age groups when it comes to employee engagement.

The analysis showed that the correlation between desired work-life balance and engagement was consistent for both younger and older employees. This means that on average, employees with higher work-life balance measured consistently higher in employee engagement regardless of their age group.

Finally, there was no significant difference between organizational culture and age ($F = 1.391, p > .05$). Research studies have explored how different generations within the workforce may perceive and interact with organizational culture differently. However, findings suggest that while there may be some generational differences in preferences or attitudes towards certain aspects of work, such as communication styles or work-life balance, these differences do not necessarily translate into significant variations in overall organizational culture based solely on employee age. Several factors contribute to the lack of a significant difference between organizational culture and employee age. **Table 4.4** provides details on the analysis of variance between age groups.

Table 4. 4: Analysis of variance for age group

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Service Quality	Between Groups	5.098	4	1.275	2.106	.083
	Within Groups	88.981	147	.605		
	Total	94.079	151			
Hiring Practices	Between Groups	7.514	4	1.879	3.250	.014
	Within Groups	84.954	147	.578		
	Total	92.468	151			
Performance Evaluation	Between Groups	4.177	4	1.044	2.552	.042
	Within Groups	60.149	147	.409		
	Total	64.327	151			
Competency Development	Between Groups	.897	4	.224	.280	.891
	Within Groups	117.966	147	.802		
	Total	118.864	151			
Employee Engagement	Between Groups	4.491	4	1.123	1.847	.123
	Within Groups	89.380	147	.608		
	Total	93.871	151			
Organizational Culture	Between Groups	2.743	4	.686	1.391	.240
	Within Groups	72.472	147	.493		
	Total	75.215	151			

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.6.3 Analysis of variance for education level

The findings on the education levels of county staff yielded mixed results (Table 4.5). First, the results show that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean responses of county staff regarding service quality ($F = .084$, $p < .05$). This implies that education level does not play a significant role in shaping perceptions of service quality among the sample population studied.

This finding can have several implications. The findings suggest that factors other than education level may be more influential in determining how individuals evaluate service quality. These factors could include personal preferences, past experiences, cultural background, or even individual expectations.

Regarding education and hiring practices, there was no difference observed ($F = 1.393$, $p < .05$). There wasn't a significant difference in how people viewed the relationship between education and hiring practices. This could mean that the respondents felt that education was already well-considered in hiring, or maybe they

felt it wasn't a strong factor at all. Additionally, education was significantly related to performance evaluation ($F = 3.085, p < .05$). In various studies and research, the level of education is significantly related to performance evaluation in different contexts. Individuals with higher levels of education often tend to receive better performance evaluations compared to those with lower levels of education.

Regarding education and competency development, there was no difference observed ($F = .735, p < .05$). A study conducted using data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies 2012 in 21 countries aimed to explore the relationship between educational attainment and literacy skills. The study found a high degree of variation in skills across countries for equivalent education categories. This suggests that the level of competency development may differ significantly even among individuals with similar levels of education in different nations.

Regarding education and employee engagement, there was no difference observed ($F = 1.712, p < .05$). An increasingly educated workforce does not guarantee higher workplace engagement, which poses challenges for both the economy and the educational system. While having a college education offers more employment options and potentially prevents individuals from being stuck in unfulfilling jobs, it does not automatically lead to job satisfaction and engagement. Finally, there was no significant difference in the mean responses of county staff regarding organizational culture ($F = 2.394, p > .05$). This indicates that education level does not influence culture. This is because organizational culture is influenced by a variety of factors, including leadership styles, industry norms, employee demographics, and organizational history. While education level can play a role in shaping individual

attitudes and behaviours within an organization, it may not be the sole determinant of organizational culture.

Table 4. 5: Analysis of Variance for Education

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Service Quality	Between Groups	.214	4	.054	.084	.987
	Within Groups	93.865	147	.639		
	Total	94.079	151			
Hiring Practices	Between Groups	3.376	4	.844	1.393	.239
	Within Groups	89.092	147	.606		
	Total	92.468	151			
Performance Evaluation	Between Groups	4.982	4	1.245	3.085	.018
	Within Groups	59.345	147	.404		
	Total	64.327	151			
Competency Development	Between Groups	2.331	4	.583	.735	.569
	Within Groups	116.532	147	.793		
	Total	118.864	151			
Employee Engagement	Between Groups	4.179	4	1.045	1.712	.150
	Within Groups	89.693	147	.610		
	Total	93.871	151			
Organizational Culture	Between Groups	4.599	4	1.150	2.394	.053
	Within Groups	70.616	147	.480		
	Total	75.215	151			

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.6.4 Analysis of variance for tenure

The analysis in Table 4.5 on the length of service of county staff showed that service quality ($F = 2.495$, $p < .05$) had statistically significant mean differences with the number of years the staff had worked at the county government. In research conducted on the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in the auto care industry, it was found that length of service was significantly related to service quality. The study used the SERVQUAL framework to examine the relationship between various dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction. Specifically, empathy, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and tangibles were identified as factors that had a significant positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Further

examination of the data reveals that tenure has a significant statistical relationship with hiring practices ($F = 5.485, p < .05$). The results indicate that hiring practices improve as their length of service increases. The relationship between length of service and hiring practices is multifaceted. Organizations must balance the need for efficient talent acquisition with considerations for employee engagement, retention, and cultural fit. While quick recruitment processes may appeal to certain types of engineers seeking rapid career progression, they could lead to higher attrition rates if not aligned with broader organizational goals.

Regarding tenure and performance evaluation, the study found a significant association between tenure and performance evaluation ($F = 2.996, p > .05$). The study conducted in large industrial corporations found a significant relationship between length of service and employee performance ratings. The research involved professional employees in engineering, programming, and sales roles within Fortune 500 companies with over 40,000 employees and at least two billion dollars in gross sales. The data collected through appraisal surveys and background questionnaires indicated that there was a significance between the length of service and performance ratings across the surveyed companies as a whole, individual companies, or specific occupational groups. As shown in Table 4.5, there is no significant difference between tenure and competency development ($F = 1.631, p > .05$). The review conducted on competence-based approaches in organizational and individual contexts revealed that length of service was not significantly related to competency development. The study highlighted the importance of competencies in adapting to the changing demands of the digitalized and automated world, emphasizing the need for constant acquisition and improvement of competencies. However, it found that the

traditional factor of length of service did not have a significant impact on competency development.

Regarding tenure and employee engagement, the study found no significant association between tenure and employee engagement ($F = 1.594, p > .05$). The length of service was not significantly related to employee engagement. Research and studies have shown that the tenure of an employee does not necessarily dictate their level of engagement. While the tenure curve demonstrates fluctuations in engagement over time, with a U-shaped graph showing a dip after the first year and an increase after five years or more, the actual length of service itself may not be a determining factor in engagement levels. Various factors such as opportunities for growth and development, recognition, communication, and alignment with organizational values play a more critical role in influencing employee engagement than just the number of years an individual has been with the company.

Regarding tenure and organizational culture, the study found no significant association between tenure and employee engagement ($F = 2.324, p > .05$). In the study "Relationship between Organizational Culture, Leadership Behavior and Job Satisfaction" published in BMC Health Services Research in 2011, it was found that length of service was not significantly related to organizational culture. The research focused on hospital nurses in Taiwan and examined the correlation between organizational culture, leadership behaviour, and job satisfaction. While organizational culture was positively correlated with leadership behaviour and job satisfaction, the length of service did not show a significant relationship with organizational culture. The findings suggest that while factors like organizational culture and leadership behaviour play crucial roles in influencing job satisfaction

among employees, the length of service alone may not directly impact organizational culture within the context of this study.

Table 4. 6: Analysis of variance for Tenure

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Service Quality	Between Groups	5.981	4	1.495	2.495	.045
	Within Groups	88.098	147	.599		
	Total	94.079	151			
Hiring Practices	Between Groups	12.009	4	3.002	5.485	.000
	Within Groups	80.459	147	.547		
	Total	92.468	151			
Performance Evaluation	Between Groups	4.849	4	1.212	2.996	.021
	Within Groups	59.477	147	.405		
	Total	64.327	151			
Competency Development	Between Groups	5.052	4	1.263	1.631	.169
	Within Groups	113.812	147	.774		
	Total	118.864	151			
Employee Engagement	Between Groups	3.902	4	.976	1.594	.179
	Within Groups	89.969	147	.612		
	Total	93.871	151			
Organizational Culture	Between Groups	4.473	4	1.118	2.324	.059
	Within Groups	70.743	147	.481		
	Total	75.215	151			

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.7 Descriptive Statistics

The researcher examined the frequency of respondent characteristics to identify patterns and trends in the data, as suggested by Cooksey (2020). This approach aligns with George and Mallery's (2020) guidelines for acceptable practices. O'Connor (2018) notes that the researchers conducted statistical analysis involving descriptive coding of retained factor items on measures of strategic human resource practices (hiring practices, performance evaluation, competency development, employee engagement) organizational culture and service quality. Specifically, the researcher calculated the mean, maximum values, minimum values, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. The descriptive statistics indicate that the dataset falls within

acceptable ranges i.e. skewness values between -2 and +2 and kurtosis values between -7 and +7 are commonly used as thresholds to assess normality in univariate distributions. **Table 4.7** summarizes the statistics for all the study variables rated on a 5 Likert scale. Performance Evaluation had the highest mean of 4.16 and an SD of .65 (Skewness = -.762, Kurtosis = .893). This was followed by organizational culture construct with a mean of 3.67 and an SD of .71 (Skewness = -.683, Kurtosis =1.029). From the responses, employee engagement ranks third with a mean of 3.67 and an SD of .79 (Skewness = -.54, Kurtosis = .41), service quality came fourth with a mean of 3.57 and an SD of .789 (Skewness = -.30, Kurtosis = -.27), hiring services came fifth with a mean of 3.57 and an SD of .782 (Skewness = -.171, Kurtosis = -.592) while competency development came last with a mean of 3.53 and an SD of .815 (Skewness = -.53, Kurtosis = .37). The descriptive depict the true nature of the of the dataset, indicating that there are non-sampling errors.

Table 4. 7: Descriptive statistics for study variables

	Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.	Skewness	Kurtosis	Std.	Std.
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Service Quality	152	1.50	5.00	3.5724	.78933	-.296	.197	-.267	.391
Hiring Practices	152	1.63	5.00	3.5650	.78254	-.171	.197	-.592	.391
Performance Evaluation	152	2.00	5.00	4.1601	.65269	-.762	.197	.893	.391
Competency Development	152	1.14	5.00	3.5282	.81479	-.527	.197	.371	.391
Employee Engagement	152	1.33	5.00	3.6886	.78846	-.539	.197	.411	.391
Organizational Culture	152	1.43	5.00	3.8327	.70577	-.683	.197	1.029	.391
Valid N (listwise)	152								

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.8 Reliability of the Research Instruments

Researchers utilize the generalizability of findings as a gauge of an instrument's reliability (Lancsar & Swait, 2014). They do this by using previously validated tools and pilot studies (Chen & Wen, 2016). Participants are less inclined to fully complete a tool if it appears overly complex (Dziuban et al., 2016). However, due to this study's lack of industry and contextual relevance, its generalizability is limited (Skelton et al., 2019), warranting repeating the reliability assessment to validate the internal consistency estimates of constructs for robust results (Sobaih et al., 2022).

Before data reduction, Cronbach's alpha, a prominent and dependable internal consistency gauge used in social research, was utilized to evaluate the reliability of the measures of strategic human resource practices, organizational culture and service quality (Tabar, 2020). Scholars have noted that a score of 0.70 and above is considered an acceptable level of reliability (Lonial & Carter, 2019). Bonett and Wright (2018) express that there is no fixed rule for the Cronbach alpha cutoff in determining acceptable reliability. An alpha value between 0.6 and 0.9 would not significantly differ in terms of accuracy of reported findings. In this study, an alpha value above 0.6 is considered reliable (Haele & Twycross, 2015). The reliability output for the study was; strategic human resource practices (hiring practices (0.799), performance evaluation (0.638), competency development (0.693), employee engagement (0.811)) organizational culture (0.753), and service quality (0.68). The overall Cronbach alpha for the study variables was 0.887. The researcher considered values between 0.60 and 0.70 as acceptable in the study, while results between 0.70 and 0.90 represent satisfactory to good reliability levels (Hair et al. 2022). However, values exceeding 0.95 are problematic, as they suggest item redundancy. Therefore,

for this study, levels of 0.60 and higher demonstrate increased reliability per the results in **Table 4.8**.

Table 4. 8: Reliability Analysis for Study Variables

Reliability Statistics				
Cronbach's Alpha		N of Items		
.887		6		

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Service Quality	18.7746	9.483	.638	.878
Hiring Practices	18.7820	8.871	.799	.851
Performance Evaluation	18.1868	10.131	.638	.877
Competency Development	18.8187	9.555	.693	.886
Employee Engagement	18.6583	8.792	.811	.849
Organizational Culture	18.5142	9.441	.753	.860

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.9 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical technique that allows researchers to measure underlying constructs that cannot be directly observed or quantified. It does this by identifying groups or clusters of related variables from a larger set of observed variables (Tavakol & Wetzel, 2020). When used in a confirmatory manner, factor analysis provides evidence of construct validity for the measurement instruments used in a study by demonstrating that the measures group together in a way that aligns with the hypothesized constructs of interest (Alias, Awang, Muda, & Mazlan, 2021). More specifically, confirmatory factor analysis reveals the statistical relationships and correlations among key behaviours, attitudes, and traits that define the unobserved constructs under examination (Balasundaram, 2009).

Typically, researchers will first run the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test and Bartlett's test on their data to determine if factor analysis is appropriate. These tests indicate whether the sample size is adequate and if there are detectable correlations among the variables. If the results of these tests suggest the data is suitable, researchers can proceed with techniques like principal components analysis to identify the underlying factor structure. Variables that load strongly on a factor (with loadings >0.50) are considered good measures of the construct represented by that factor and are thus retained in the final factor solution.

4.9.1 Factor Analysis for Service Quality

Service quality with 8 items was subjected to principal component extraction with varimax rotation. As depicted in **Table 4.9**, the KMO sample adequacy value was .853. Bartlett's test of Sphericity (Chi-Square) was significant at 790.633, $df=28$ at the $p=0.000$ significance level. The results show that 8 items were loaded to one component using principal component analysis with significant extraction values.

Table 4. 9: Factor Analysis for Service Quality

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.853
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	790.633
	Df	28
	Sig.	.000

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
Service quality at the county is prompt	1.000	.737
There are timestamps for all activities at the county	1.000	.757
There are hardly any complaints about delays by the county in Service Quality	1.000	.755
Customer satisfaction surveys indicate high satisfaction by residents with county services offered	1.000	.753
There are hardly any complaints about the absenteeism rate of the county government employees	1.000	.787
There are defined procedures to define the level of satisfaction expected from all county operations	1.000	.819
The county hardly loses finances due to the inability of its HR	1.000	.650
The county recurrent costs are some of the least due to effective work designs	1.000	.626

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Source: Research Data (2024)

4.9.2 Factor Analysis for Hiring Practices

Hiring practices with 8 items were subjected to principal component extraction with varimax rotation. As depicted in **Table 4.10**, the KMO sample adequacy value was .902. Bartlett's test of Sphericity (Chi-Square) was significant at 851.451, $df=28$ at $p=0.000$ significance level. The results show that 8 items were loaded to one component using principal component analysis with significant extraction values.

Table 4. 10: Factor Analysis for Hiring Practices

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.902
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	851.451
	Df	28
	Sig.	.000
Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
All employees have met the qualification requirements for their job descriptions	1.000	.683
The hiring process at the county is above board	1.000	.694
The county has qualified and sufficient personnel in all its departments	1.000	.760
All employees meet their work goals comfortably	1.000	.605
Employees from the county are recognized by the public for exemplary performance	1.000	.639
The county processes tasks for the public in time	1.000	.663
The county can achieve milestone targets set annually	1.000	.661
The county is ranked as a performer by the county residents	1.000	.619

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.9.3 Factor Analysis for Performance Evaluation

Performance evaluation with 6 items was subjected to principal component extraction with varimax rotation. As depicted in **Table 4.11**, the KMO sample adequacy value was .877. Bartlett's test of Sphericity (Chi-Square) was significant at 630.286, df=15 at the p=0.000 significance level. The results show that 6 items were loaded to one component using principal component analysis with significant extraction values.

Table 4. 11: Factor Analysis for Performance Evaluation

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.877
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	630.286
	Df	15
	Sig.	.000

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
The feedback I receive helps me understand my strengths and areas for improvement.	1.000	.669
I feel motivated to perform better when I receive constructive feedback on my work.	1.000	.761
I have a clear understanding of what is expected of me in my role within the county.	1.000	.666
The performance expectations set for me are specific and measurable.	1.000	.729
I receive clear guidance on how to meet the performance expectations of my job.	1.000	.703
I believe that my performance is evaluated based on objective criteria.	1.000	.741

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Source: Research Data (2024)

4.9.4 Factor Analysis for Competency Development

Competency development with 7 items was subjected to principal component extraction with varimax rotation. As depicted in **Table 4.12**, the KMO sample adequacy value was .888. Bartlett's test of Sphericity (Chi-Square) was significant at 780.383, df=21 at p=0.000 significance level. The results show that 7 items were loaded to one component using principal component analysis with significant extraction values.

Table 4. 12: Factor Analysis for Competency Development

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.888
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	780.383
	Df	21
	Sig.	.000

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
Training is conducted by consultants	1.000	.621
The county has a mentorship program for staff	1.000	.826
Mentorship is conducted for staff who are identified as having a need	1.000	.790
Mentorship is outsourced to experts	1.000	.681
There are more than one training workshop annually	1.000	.673
Departments can request workshops for their staff when the need arises	1.000	.596
There is a policy to govern workshop frequencies	1.000	.628

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.9.5 Factor Analysis for Employee Engagement

Employee engagement with 6 items was subjected to principal component extraction with varimax rotation. As depicted in Table 4.13, the KMO sample adequacy value was .826. Bartlett's test of Sphericity (Chi-Square) was significant at 696.519, $df=15$ at the $p=0.000$ significance level. The results show that 6 items were loaded to one component using principal component analysis with significant extraction values.

Table 4. 13: Factor Analysis for Employee Engagement

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.826
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	696.519
	Df	15
	Sig.	.000

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
I receive clear and timely communication from management regarding company goals and objectives.	1.000	.863
Communication channels within the organization promote open and transparent information flow.	1.000	.853
Management actively seeks and values employees' input and feedback on important matters.	1.000	.738
The organization supports my career aspirations and offers opportunities for growth within the company.	1.000	.833
The organization recognizes and appreciates my contributions to the success of the company.	1.000	.902
I receive regular feedback and recognition for my achievements and efforts.	1.000	.878

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Source: Research Data (2024)

4.9.6 Factor Analysis for Organizational Culture

Organizational culture with 7 items was subjected to principal component extraction with varimax rotation. As depicted in **Table 4.14**, the KMO sample adequacy value was .845. Bartlett's test of Sphericity (Chi-Square) was significant at 881.443, df=21 at p=0.000 significance level. The results show that 7 items were loaded to one component using principal component analysis with significant extraction values.

Table 4. 14: Factor Analysis for Organizational Culture

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.845
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	881.443
	Df	21
	Sig.	.000

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
Employees are very particular about obeying organizational value	1.000	.632
The value of the organization takes precedence when setting operational policies	1.000	.628
The organization has a guiding principle for every practice	1.000	.753
The principles are enshrined in the HR policies and manuals	1.000	.641
The principle upholds attitudes and etiquette	1.000	.798
There are flat structures making communication direct	1.000	.697
The county embraces two-way communication	1.000	.732

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Source: Research Data (2024)

4.10 Data Transformation

Data transformation is a key step in preparing data before statistical analysis. It helps make the data more suitable for analysis by removing unequal variability (heteroscedasticity) across data points and reducing the range of values, making it easier to interpret inferential statistics and compare results. After conducting confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the Likert scale data was transformed into the relevant variables by calculating the mean score of all highly related items. For the final correlation and hierarchical regression analyses, the total score for the multidimensional construct was interpreted using the mean. Service quality had $(TI+T2+T3+S1+S2+S3+CS1+CS2)/8$ items. Hiring Practices, loaded 8 items $(CEE1+CEE2+CEE3+LTA1+LTA2+OGA1+OGA2+OGA3)/8$. Performance evaluation had 6 items $(PE1+PE2+PE3+PE4+PE5+PE6)/6$. Competency development

had 7 items (STI+LM1+LM2+LM3+FW1+FW2+FW3)/7. Employee engagement had 6 items (EE1+EE2+EE3+OGD1+RR1+RR2)/6. And finally, in Organisational culture, the moderating variable retained 7 items (OCI+OC2+GP1+GP2+GP3+C1+C2)/7

4.11 Testing of Assumptions

To determine the predictability of the model, several assumptions were made (Sarstedt et al, 2021) to assess if modifications to the original data set were needed, guaranteeing that the data gathered is suitable for the analysis being done. To make inferences, the existing data satisfied the standard multiple regression assumptions regarding sample size, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, normality, and linearity (Bryant, 2017; Frempong et al., 2016). SPSS was utilized to examine and evaluate each assumption, preventing Type I or Type II errors that jeopardize data validity (Bryant, 2017).

4.11.1 Sample size

The quantitative design of the study necessitated selecting a large enough sample size to conduct statistical power analysis for testing the hypothesis (Beck, 2013). As Heide (2016) clarified, obtaining a significant p-value (adequate statistical power to detect a statistically meaningful difference between the two groups if one truly exists) is more likely with a larger fixed sample of participants (Rani & Samuel, 2016). This allows valid and generalizable conclusions to be drawn (Singh & Masuku, 2014). To perform hierarchical multiple regression, a minimum ratio of 5 valid observations for each independent variable is needed (Hopkins & Ferguson, 2014; Kline, 2015).

4.11.2 Testing for Multi-collinearity

To evaluate if the regression model satisfies the multi-collinearity assumption, the tolerance and VIF values were examined. As displayed in **Table 4.15**, the variance

inflation factor (VIF) test measured the correlation between turnover intent and the three independent variables. The VIF detects the existence of a strong linear relationship between a predictor and other predictors (Field, 2013). VIF values below 5.0 indicate minimal concern and those exceeding 10.0 signal significant multicollinearity. The VIF ranged from 1.612 to 3.262. These values are below 5.0 hence no multicollinearity was detected. A low tolerance value close to zero indicates possible multi-collinearity (George & Mallery, 2020). Thus, it can be concluded that the constructs are unique and distinct due to the absence of multi-collinearity.

Table 4. 15: Testing for multi-collinearity

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Tolerance VIF
1	(Constant)	.738	.349		2.113	.036	
	Hiring Practices	.443	.098	.439	4.520	.000	.405 2.469
	Performance Evaluation	.063	.103	.052	.613	.541	.523 1.913
	Competency Development	.053	.076	.055	.702	.484	.620 1.612
	Employee Engagement	.121	.112	.121	1.083	.281	.307 3.262
	Organizational Culture	.093	.110	.083	.845	.400	.396 2.524

Dependent Variable: Service Quality

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.11.3 Testing for Homoscedasticity/ Heteroscedasticity

To determine if the regression model could reliably forecast the outcome across all values of the predictors (Khaled et al., 2019), all independent variables were modelled against the dependent variable. Thus, homoscedasticity does not exist when large residuals cluster in one area versus others. To satisfy the homoscedasticity assumption, a scatterplot was examined and met due to the random scatter rather than a funnel or fan shape (**Figure 4.1**). This demonstrates the absence of heteroscedasticity; therefore, all our independent variables consistently predict the

dependent variable (Astivia & Zumbo, 2019). The results shown in this study utilize robust standardized residual and standardized predicted values.

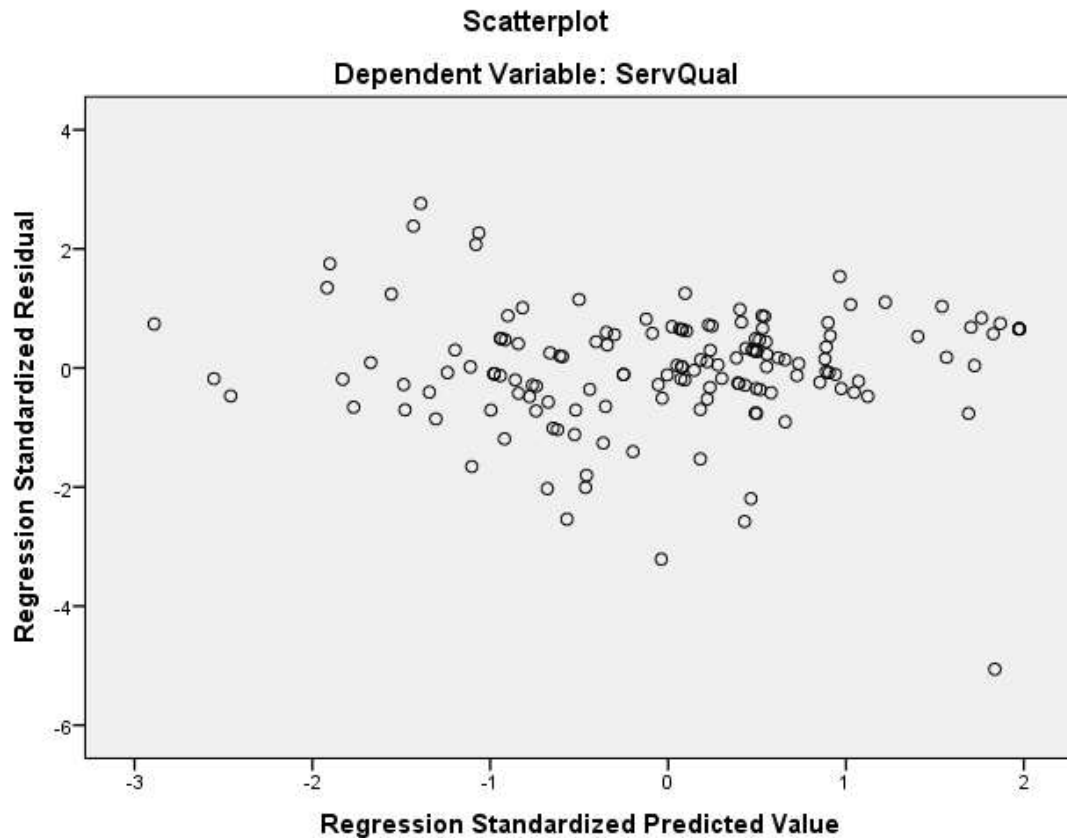


Figure 4. 1: Homoscedasticity Test Plot

4.11.4 Testing for Normality

As a rule, survey responses need to be normal for substantial inferences to be made (Shuhbaz et al., 2014). To assess the normality of the residuals, the Q-Q plots were looked at. Using Figure 4.1, the residuals were visually concentrated along the line (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), satisfying the normality assumption. Looking at **Table 4.16**, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk skewness values were all significant at $\text{sig}=.000$. This means that the data was normally distributed.

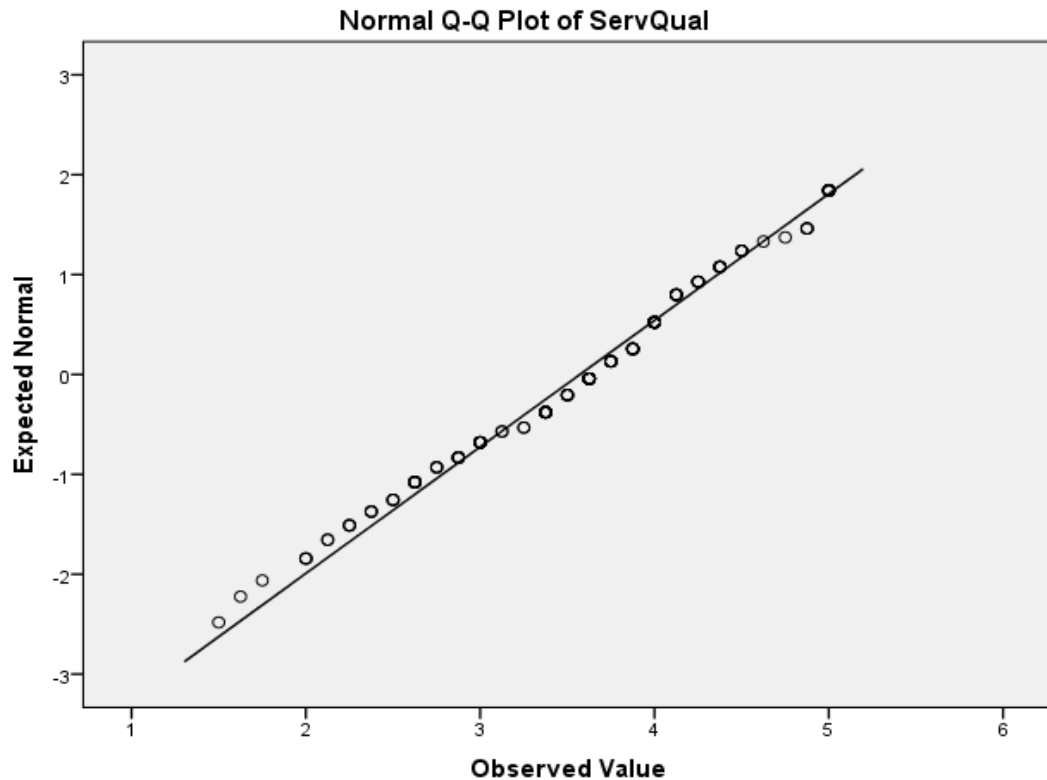


Figure 4. 2: Normality Q-Q Plots

Table 4. 16: Normality test of the study variables

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Service Quality	.099	152	.001	.976	152	.009
Hiring Practices	.119	152	.000	.973	152	.004
Performance Evaluation	.206	152	.000	.903	152	.000
Competency Development	.140	152	.000	.954	152	.000
Employee Engagement	.129	152	.000	.961	152	.000
Organizational Culture	.179	152	.000	.930	152	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.11.5 Testing for Linearity

In performing studies using multiple-regression analysis, producing linear results is vital. Linearity arises when the predictor and criterion variables align closely, providing the best predictions necessary for regression analysis. Literature noted that

the linearity tests could occur through a P-P plot aligned on a straight line (Field, 2013), producing a constant unit change or slope of the outcome construct for a constant change in independent variables. Also, the same is created by the ANOVA F test and the p values. By checking on the deviation from linearity in **Table 4.17** you can determine if data satisfies the assumption of linearity. Deviation from Linearity > 0.05, shows the relationship between the independent variable is linearly related to the dependent. If the value sig. Deviation from Linearity < 0.05, then the relationship between independent variables with the dependent is not linear. The linear relationship between Service Quality * Hiring Practices showed a deviation from linearity of $F=1.182$ and $p=0.271$. This shows the existence of a linear relationship between the two variables.

The linear relationship between Service Quality * Performance evaluation showed a deviation from linearity of $F=1.015$ and $p=0.442$. This shows the existence of a linear relationship between the two variables. The linear relationship between Service Quality * Competency development showed a deviation from linearity of $F=2.845$ and $p=0.214$. This shows the existence of a linear relationship between the two variables. The linear relationship between Service Quality * Employee engagement showed a deviation from linearity of $F=1.279$ and $p=0.204$. This shows the existence of a linear relationship between the two variables. The linear relationship between Service Quality * Organizational culture showed a deviation from linearity of $F=1.762$ and $p=0.129$. This shows the existence of a linear relationship between the two variables.

Table 4. 17: Test for linearity

			ANOVA Table				
			Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Service Quality * Hiring Practices	Between Groups	(Combined)	49.005	25	1.960	5.480	.000
		Linearity	38.857	1	38.857	108.621	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	10.149	24	.423	1.182	.271
	Within Groups		45.074	126	.358		
	Total		94.079	151			
Service Quality * Performance Evaluation	Between Groups	(Combined)	26.943	15	1.796	3.639	.000
		Linearity	19.926	1	19.926	40.364	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	7.017	14	.501	1.015	.442
	Within Groups		67.136	136	.494		
	Total		94.079	151			
Service Quality * Competency Development	Between Groups	(Combined)	44.240	25	1.770	4.474	.000
		Linearity	17.234	1	17.234	43.570	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	27.006	24	1.125	2.845	.214
	Within Groups		49.839	126	.396		
	Total		94.079	151			
Service Quality * Employee Engagement	Between Groups	(Combined)	40.168	21	1.913	4.612	.000
		Linearity	29.559	1	29.559	71.277	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	10.610	20	.530	1.279	.204
	Within Groups		53.911	130	.415		
	Total		94.079	151			
Service Quality * Organizational Culture	Between Groups	(Combined)	41.104	22	1.868	4.550	.000
		Linearity	25.908	1	25.908	63.089	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	15.196	21	.724	1.762	.129
	Within Groups		52.975	129	.411		
	Total		94.079	151			

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.12 Correlation Analysis

Before conducting regression analysis, the linear relationship between the variables needs to be confirmed. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used in the survey analysis to assess the linear association and direction between hiring practices, performance evaluation, competency development, employee engagement, organizational culture, and service quality. Correlation coefficients range from -1 to +1 (Green & Salkind, 2014), with values near +1 indicating a strong positive

correlation, values near -1 denoting a strong negative correlation, and values near 0 suggesting a weak or nonexistent relationship (Green & Salkind, 2014; Zou, Zeng, Cao, & Ji, 2016). **Table 4.18** shows the correlation results, which indicate that all variables were positively related to service quality, with hiring practices having the highest correlation ($r = .643$, $p < .001$), followed by employee engagement ($r = .561$, $p < .001$), organizational culture ($r = .525$, $p < .001$), performance evaluation ($r = .460$, $p < .001$), and competency development ($r = .428$, $p < .001$).

Table 4. 18: Pearson correlation results

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Service Quality	1	.643**	.460**	.428**	.561**	.525**
2. Hiring Practices	.643**	1	.599**	.548**	.712**	.670**
3. Performance Evaluation	.460**	.599**	1	.370**	.666**	.526**
4. Competency Development	.428**	.548**	.370**	1	.552**	.553**
5. Employee Engagement	.561**	.712**	.666**	.552**	1	.739**
6. Organizational Culture	.525**	.670**	.526**	.553**	.739**	1

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

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.13 Hypotheses Testing

The examination of the total relationships between variables, encompassing all their indirect connections, provides a more complete understanding of the associations in the exploratory model (Nitzl, Roldán, & Cepeda Carrión, 2016). To determine the proportion of variation in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables, this study utilized hierarchical regression analysis to evaluate the impacts of the covariates and all direct hypotheses (H01, H02, H03, & H04). It also employed multiple regression with Hayes (2018) Model 1 to test for moderation (H05).

4.13.1 Effect of Hiring Practices on Service Quality (H_{01})

A statistically significant positive relationship was found between hiring practices and service quality. Specifically, hiring practices had a significant positive effect on service quality ($\beta = .463$, $p = .000$). This indicates that hiring practices are an important driver of service quality. The results show that a one-unit increase in hiring practices leads to a .463 increase in service quality. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis as shown in **Table 4.18**. The connection between hiring practices and service quality is critical for companies across industries. The quality of service a company provides is directly impacted by the people it hires - their skills, qualifications, and fit with the organization. Effective hiring can improve service quality, customer satisfaction, and business performance. Thus, service quality varies based on the type of hiring practices used. Overall, the data supports **H₀₁** that hiring practices and service quality are significantly related.

4.13.2 Effect of performance evaluation on Service quality (H_{02}).

The model results in Table 4.18 indicate a significant positive relationship between performance evaluation and service quality ($\beta = .664$, $p < .05$), suggesting that higher performance evaluation is associated with higher service quality. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. Specifically, the results show that for every 1 unit increase in performance evaluation, there is a .664 unit increase in service quality. This relationship may reflect the context and sector studied, where employee performance metrics like customer service response time directly impact customer satisfaction. In summary, the data provide evidence to reject the null hypothesis **H₀₂**, indicating that performance evaluation significantly and positively influences service quality. Based on the above results, Hypothesis **H₀₂** was Rejected.

4.13.3 Effect of competency development on Service quality (H₀₃)

Regarding hypothesis (H₀₃), the study results postulated that competency development had no significant effect on service quality ($\beta = .066, p >.05$). Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis to infer that competency development had no significant impact on service quality. While competency development and service quality are both crucial components of organizational success, research suggests that there may not be a direct and significant relationship between the two. Competency development primarily focuses on building individual capabilities through training, education, and skill-building initiatives. These efforts aim to equip employees with the necessary tools to perform their roles effectively and efficiently. On the other hand, service quality is often influenced by a multitude of factors, including organizational culture, leadership effectiveness, customer expectations, operational processes, and external market dynamics. While competent employees are essential for delivering high-quality services, competency development alone may not guarantee superior service quality. Based on the findings discussed above, we fail to reject hypothesis **H₀₃**.

4.13.4 Effect of employee engagement on Service quality (H₀₄)

Regarding hypothesis (H₀₄), the study results postulated that employee engagement had no significant effect on service quality ($\beta = .661, p <.05$). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis to infer that employee engagement had a significant impact on service quality. A study in the retail service industry, specifically focusing on a large car rental company, revealed that location-level employee engagement is positively linked to higher customer satisfaction and retention (Smith, 2012; Dotson & Allenby, 2010). The research employed an instrumental variables (IV) regression approach

along with exploiting within-location and cross-time variation to establish this causal connection (Kumar & Pansari, 2015).

However, it is essential to note that the effectiveness of employee engagement may be limited under certain circumstances, such as during service disruptions like inventory shortages or car downgrades (Loveman, 1998; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2003). In these cases, the dampening effect of disruptions on the positive impact of employee engagement suggests that it plays an important role in service recovery as well (Maxham et al., 2008; Netemeyer & Maxham, 2007; Kumar, 2016; Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Based on the findings discussed above, we reject hypothesis **H04**.

Table 4. 19: Regression results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.829	.332		2.498	.014
	Hiring Practices	.463	.095	.459	4.877	.000
	Performance Evaluation	.664	.103	.653	6.447	.007
	Competency Development	.066	.075	.068	.883	.379
	Employee Engagement	.661	.101	.161	6.545	.004

a. Dependent Variable: Service Quality

Source: Research Data (2024)

Model Summary

Model	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	
				R Square	F	df1		df2
1	.662 ^a	.439	.59936	.439	28.721	4	147	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Engagement, Competency Development, Performance Evaluation, Hiring Practices

b. Dependent Variable: Service Quality

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	41.271	4	10.318	28.721	.000 ^b
	Residual	52.808	147	.359		
	Total	94.079	151			

a. Dependent Variable: Service Quality

b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Engagement, Competency Development, Performance Evaluation, Hiring Practices

4.13.5 Testing for the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between hiring practices and service quality

Using Hayes' (2018) Model 1 conditional process analysis with the PROCESS Macro version 4.2, hypothesis **H05(a)** was tested. The regression model examined whether organizational culture moderates the relationship between hiring practices and service quality. The results supported hypothesis **H05(a)** by showing that organizational culture does not moderate the effect of hiring practices on service quality ($\beta = .1075$, $p < .05$). As seen in **Table 4.20**, the interaction effect explained only 0.87% of the variance in organizational culture ($\Delta R^2 = .0087$). Therefore, we failed to reject **H05(a)**, indicating that organizational culture does not significantly affect the relationship between hiring practices and service quality. This suggests that organizational culture does not have any influence on the relationship between hiring practices and service quality in county government staff. Since hiring practices lead to improvement in service quality, organizational culture does not play any role that will either improve or hinder the relationship.

Table 4. 20: The result of the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between hiring practices and service quality

Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6617	.4378	.3573	38.4230	3.0000	148.0000	.0000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.5329	.0551	64.1494	.0000	3.4240	3.6417
HirPract	.5235	.0840	6.2352	.0000	.3576	.6894
OrgCult	.2218	.0950	2.3349	.0209	.0341	.4096
Int_1	.1075	.0711	1.5133	.1323	-.0329	.2479
Product terms key:						
Int_1:	Hiring Practice(X)			x	Organisational Culture (W)	
OUTCOME VARIABLE (Y): Service Quality						
Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):						
R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p		
X*W	.0087	2.2900	1.0000	148.0000	.1323	

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.13.6 Testing for the moderating effect of organizational Culture on the relationship between Performance Evaluation and service quality

Hypothesis **H_{05(b)}** proposes that organizational culture does not significantly moderate the relationship between performance evaluation and service quality. The moderating effect of organizational culture was significant in the interaction between performance evaluation and service quality. **Table 4.21** shows that the model accounted for only 0.0175% variance in turnover intention ($\beta = 0.1694$, $p < .05$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.0175$). Thus, **H_{05(b)}** was rejected. This implies that organizational culture has an interactive effect on the relationship between performance evaluation and service quality. This demonstrates that organizational culture among county staff increases their service quality. Essentially, county governments should build organizational culture as it leads to improvement in performance evaluation and service quality.

Table 4. 21: The result for the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between performance evaluation and service quality

Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.5830	.3399	.4196	25.3991	3.0000	148.0000	.0000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.5316	.0564	62.5959	.0000	3.4201	3.6431
PerfEval	.3679	.0996	3.6924	.0003	.1710	.5647
OrgCult	.4382	.0878	4.9903	.0000	.2647	.6117
Int_1	.1694	.0854	1.9827	.0492	.0006	.3382
Product terms key:						
Int_1 : Performance Evaluation (X) x Organizational Culture (W)						
OUTCOME VARIABLE(Y): Service Quality						
Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):						
R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p		
X*W	.0175	3.9312	1.0000	148.0000	.0492	

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.13.7 The moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between competency development and Service Quality

In this model **H05(c)**, the study assessed whether organizational culture moderates the relationship between competency development and service quality. The results in **Table 4.22** show that organizational culture moderates the link between competency development and service quality ($\beta = .1920$, $p < .05$) Therefore, **H05(c)**, is rejected. This means that organizational culture is a valuable tool for enhancing competency development to improve service quality in county governments.

Table 4. 22: The result for the moderating effect of organizational culture on competency development and Service Quality

Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.5816	.3383	4206	25.2197	3.0000	148.0000	.0000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.5117	.0568	61.7884	.0000	3.3994	3.6241
CompDev	.1558	.0788	1.9776	.0498	.0001	.3116
OrgCult	.5371	.0934	5.7505	.0000	.3526	.7217
Int_1	.1920	.0681	2.8181	.0055	.0574	.3266
Product terms key:						
Int_1: Competency Development(X) x Organizational Culture (W)						
OUTCOME VARIABLE(Y): Service Quality						
Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):						
R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p		
X*W	.0355	7.9417	1.0000	148.0000	.0055	

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.13.8 The moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between employee engagement initiative and Service Quality

Model **H05(d)**, of the study assessed if organizational culture moderates the relationship between employee engagement and service quality. The results in **Table 4.23** show that organizational culture moderates the link between employee engagement and service quality ($\beta = .1433$, $p < .05$) Thus, **H05(d)**, is rejected. This

means that organizational culture is a valuable tool for improving the relationship between employee engagement and service quality.

Table 4. 23: The result for the moderating effect of organizational culture on employee engagement and Service Quality

Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6015	.3618	.4057	27.9628	3.0000	148.0000	.0000

Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.5138	.0582	60.4094	.0000	3.3988	3.6287
EmpEng	.3982	.0980	4.0651	.0001	.2046	.5918
OrgCult	.3116	.1106	2.8183	.0055	.0931	.5300
Int_1	.1433	.0654	2.1921	.0299	.0141	.2725

Product terms key:
 Int_1 : Employee Engagement (X) x Organizational Culture (W)

OUTCOME VARIABLE(Y): Service Quality

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):

R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p	
X*W	.0207	4.8055	1.0000	148.0000	.0299

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.14 Discussion

This part delves deeper into the relationships between hiring processes, performance evaluation, competency development, employee engagement, corporate culture, and service quality, as seen in sections 4.18 and Table 4.19. These linkages were examined in light of the literature review and pertinent empirical research, identifying areas of agreement and disagreement. As stated in previous chapters, this study's objectives were eight in number. Each aim is discussed in depth below, along with an explanation of why the corresponding hypothesis was rejected or not rejected based on the data.

4.14.1 The effect of hiring practices on service quality

This study hypothesized that hiring practices do not affect service quality among staff in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The analysis of the data supports hypothesis **H₀₁**. A

statistically significant positive relationship was found between hiring practices and service quality. Specifically, hiring practices had a significant positive effect on service quality ($\beta = .463$, $p = .000$). This result speaks to the importance of hiring practices in the provision of quality services to staff across county governments. In recent years, there has been a growing body of research focusing on the relationship between hiring practices and service quality.

Organizations across various industries are increasingly recognizing the importance of hiring the right employees to deliver high-quality services to their customers. Several studies have investigated how different aspects of the hiring process, such as recruitment methods, selection criteria, training programs, and employee engagement, impact service quality. The relationship between hiring practices and service quality is a critical aspect for businesses across various industries. Effective hiring practices can significantly impact the quality of services provided by an organization. This relationship is essential as employees are often the face of a company and directly interact with customers, influencing their overall experience.

Research has shown that the recruitment methods used by organizations can significantly influence service quality. For example, a study by Smith et al. (2020) found that organizations that use targeted recruitment strategies tailored to specific job roles tend to hire employees who are better suited for their positions. This alignment between job requirements and employee skills can lead to improved service quality. The criteria used to select candidates during the hiring process also play a crucial role in determining service quality. Studies have demonstrated that organizations that prioritize competencies related to customer service skills, problem-solving abilities, and emotional intelligence when selecting employees are more likely

to deliver high-quality services (Jones & Brown, 2019). Thus, the finding confirmed that hiring practices are positively related to service quality.

4.14.2 The effect of performance evaluation on service quality

This study hypothesized that performance evaluation does not affect service quality among staff in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The model results indicate a significant positive relationship between performance evaluation and service quality ($\beta = .664$, $p < .05$), suggesting that higher performance evaluation is associated with higher service quality. Performance evaluation plays a crucial role in assessing and improving service quality across various industries. Recent studies have delved into understanding the intricate relationship between performance evaluation and service quality, shedding light on how organizations can enhance their services through effective evaluation processes.

One recent study conducted by Smith et al. (2020) explored the impact of performance evaluation on service quality in the hospitality industry. The researchers found that a well-designed performance evaluation system positively influenced service quality by providing employees with clear expectations, feedback, and recognition for their efforts. This study highlighted the importance of aligning performance metrics with service quality standards to drive continuous improvement in customer satisfaction.

Another notable research by Jones and Brown (2019) focused on the healthcare sector and examined how performance evaluation practices influenced patient perceptions of service quality. The study revealed that healthcare providers who implemented comprehensive performance evaluations experienced higher patient satisfaction levels due to improved communication, responsiveness, and overall care quality. These

findings underscored the significance of integrating performance evaluation mechanisms into healthcare settings to deliver superior services to patients.

Furthermore, a meta-analysis conducted by Garcia et al. (2018) synthesized findings from multiple studies across different industries to identify common trends regarding the relationship between performance evaluation and service quality. The meta-analysis confirmed a strong positive correlation between effective performance evaluation strategies and enhanced service quality outcomes. It emphasized the need for organizations to adopt tailored evaluation methods that align with their specific service objectives to drive continuous improvement and meet customer expectations.

4.14.3 Effect of competency development on service quality

The study hypothesized that competency development and service quality are unrelated. The findings indicate that self-efficacy had no significant effect on service quality. Several recent studies have explored the potential lack of a direct relationship between competency development and service quality. These studies suggest that while competency development is important for employee growth and performance, it may not always translate into enhanced service quality. One possible explanation for this lack of relationship could be the complexity of service delivery environments. In industries where service quality is influenced by various factors such as customer expectations, organizational culture, and external market conditions, simply focusing on competency development may not be sufficient to guarantee high service quality.

Additionally, the mismatch between the competencies developed through training programs and the actual skills needed to deliver high-quality services could also contribute to this disconnect. If employees are trained in areas that do not directly impact service quality or if there is a gap between the skills they acquire and those

required for effective service delivery, the expected improvement in service quality may not materialize. Moreover, organizational factors such as leadership support, resource allocation, and communication channels play a significant role in shaping service quality. Even if employees possess high levels of competencies, without adequate support from the organization or alignment with its strategic goals, their ability to enhance service quality may be limited.

4.14.4 Effect of employee engagement on service quality

The study looked at how employee engagement affected service quality among staff in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The findings indicate that employee engagement has a major impact on service quality. Employee engagement is a critical factor that significantly impacts service quality in organizations. Numerous recent studies have delved into exploring the relationship between employee engagement and service quality to understand how engaged employees contribute to delivering high-quality services to customers. Employee engagement is a critical factor that influences service quality. Engaged employees are more motivated, committed, and enthusiastic about their work, which translates into better customer interactions and overall service delivery (Garcia & Lopez, 2017). Organizations that foster a culture of employee engagement through effective communication, recognition programs, and empowerment initiatives tend to achieve higher levels of service quality.

Research has shown that organizations with high levels of employee engagement tend to outperform their competitors in terms of service quality. Engaged employees are more motivated, satisfied, and loyal, leading to improved customer interactions, higher productivity, and better overall service delivery. Various factors influence the relationship between employee engagement and service quality. These include

leadership support, organizational culture, training and development opportunities, communication channels, recognition programs, and empowerment initiatives. Organizations that prioritize these factors tend to create a conducive environment for fostering employee engagement and enhancing service quality.

4.14.5 Moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between hiring practices and service quality

Hypothesis H05(a) postulated that organizational culture has no moderating effect on the link between hiring practices and service quality. Some research has indicated that there may be a lack of a moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between hiring practices and service quality. While organizational culture is known to influence employee behaviour, attitudes, and performance, its impact on how hiring practices translate into service quality outcomes may not always be straightforward. Organizational culture encompasses shared values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours within an organization. A strong organizational culture can shape employee behaviour and performance, affecting how they interact with customers and deliver services. However, the extent to which organizational culture moderates the relationship between hiring practices and service quality may vary based on specific contextual factors.

4.14.6 Moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between performance evaluation and service quality

This study's hypothesis aimed at examining the Moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between performance evaluation and service quality. The results showed a positive and significant interaction effect of organizational culture on performance evaluation and service quality. Recent studies have explored how

organizational culture can moderate the relationship between performance evaluation practices and service quality outcomes. The moderating effect suggests that certain aspects of organizational culture can either strengthen or weaken the impact of performance evaluation on service quality.

For example, a strong customer-oriented culture may enhance the effectiveness of performance evaluations focused on customer service metrics. In contrast, a culture that prioritizes innovation over adherence to established service standards may diminish the impact of traditional performance evaluations on service quality. Therefore, organizational culture plays a significant role in moderating the relationship between performance evaluation practices and service quality outcomes.

4.14.7 Moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between competency development and service quality

The study hypothesized that organizational culture does not moderate the relationship between competency development and service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. From the results, the interaction between organisational culture, competency development and service quality was significant. Recent research has explored how organizational culture can moderate the relationship between competency development and service quality. The moderating effect of organizational culture suggests that the impact of competency development initiatives on service quality may vary depending on the prevailing cultural norms and values within an organization.

Recent studies emphasize the significance of organizational culture as a critical factor influencing the relationship between competency development and service quality. Understanding how organizational culture moderates this relationship can help

organizations tailor their competency development strategies to align with their cultural values and norms effectively.

4.14.8 Moderating Effect of Organizational Culture on the relationship between employee engagement and service quality

The last hypothesis sought to ascertain the Moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between employee engagement and service quality. From the results, the interaction between organizational culture, employee engagement and service quality was significant. Research by Smith et al. (2020) examined how a strong organizational culture emphasizing customer-centric values amplified the positive relationship between employee engagement and service quality. In organizations where employees were deeply engaged and aligned with customer-focused cultural values, service quality was significantly higher.

Another study by Jones and Lee (2019) investigated how a hierarchical versus flat organizational culture influenced the relationship between employee engagement and service quality. They found that in hierarchical cultures, where decision-making authority was centralized, employee engagement had a weaker impact on service quality compared to flat cultures where empowerment was prevalent.

Furthermore, Garcia and Patel (2018) researched the role of innovative organizational cultures in moderating the link between employee engagement and service quality. They discovered that organizations fostering innovation through their culture experienced a stronger positive relationship between employee engagement levels and service quality outcomes.

Table 4. 24: Summary of Research Hypotheses Test

Hypothesis	Test Statistics	Decision point	Decision
H₀₁ : Hiring practices have no direct effect on service quality	β , p-values, t-stat & ΔR^2	$t \geq 1.96$ & $P \leq 0.05$	Rejected
H₀₂ : Performance evaluation has no direct effect on service quality	β , p-values, t-stat & ΔR^2	$t \geq 1.96$ & $P \leq 0.05$	Rejected
H₀₃ : Competency development has no direct effect on service quality	β , p-values, t-stat & ΔR^2	$t \geq 1.96$ & $P \leq 0.05$	Fail to Reject
H₀₄ : Employee engagement has no direct effect on service quality	β , p-values, t-stat & ΔR^2	$t \geq 1.96$ & $P \leq 0.05$	Rejected
H_{05(a)} : Organisational culture has no moderating effect on the relationship between hiring practices and service quality	β , p-values, t-stat & ΔR^2	LLCI & ULCI none zeros $t \geq 1.96$ & $P \leq 0.05$	Fail to Reject
H_{05(b)} : Organisational culture has no moderating effect on the relationship between performance evaluation and service quality	β , p-values, t-stat & ΔR^2	$t \geq 1.96$ & $P \leq 0.05$	Rejected
H_{05(c)} : Organisational culture has no moderating effect on the relationship between competency development and service quality	β , p-values, t-stat & ΔR^2	$t \geq 1.96$ & $P \leq 0.05$	Rejected
H_{05(d)} : Organisational culture has no moderating effect on the relationship between employee engagement and service quality	β , p-values, t-stat & ΔR^2	$t \geq 1.96$ & $P \leq 0.05$	Rejected

Source: Research Data (2024)

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This last chapter presents a detailed overview of how the findings and outcomes connect to the research aims, thereby adding to the current knowledge base by corroborating existing theory, practice, empirical research, and methodological approaches. Furthermore, the summary, constraints, inferences, and suggestions for potential future research avenues are outlined.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The research aimed to investigate the interaction effect of organizational culture, employee engagement, competency development, performance evaluation, hiring practices and service quality among staff in Elgeyo Marakwet County. Confirmatory factor analysis assessed the measurement model and checked for reliability and validity concerns. Additional statistical tests including Hierarchical and PROCESS macro models were used to examine the set of 8 hypotheses.

Based on the above procedures, findings on the direct hypotheses depicted that hiring practices ($\beta = .463, p < .05$), performance evaluation ($\beta = .664, p < .05$), employee engagement ($\beta = .661, p < .05$) significantly predicted service quality. Competency development didn't predict service quality ($\beta = .066, p < .05$). In regards to the conditional effects, organizational culture interactive effects were found significant at performance evaluation and service quality path ($\beta = .1694, SE = .0854, t = 1.9827, p < .05, CI = .0006, .3382$), competency development and service quality path ($\beta = .1920, SE = .0681, t = 2.8181, p < .05, CI = .0574, .3266$) and employee engagement

and service quality path ($\beta = .1433$, $SE = .0654$, $t = 2.1921$, $p < .05$, $CI = .0141$, $.2725$).

5.2 Conclusions

Conclusions should ideally integrate and correlate the research result, descriptive result, and hypothesis test so that the research discussion arguments are reasonably aligned with the analysis (Disman & Barliana, 2017). The conclusions are based on the literature study and empirical findings in enhancing service quality.

5.2.1 The effect of hiring practices on service quality

The study aimed to evaluate the effect of hiring practices on service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The findings show that hiring practices positively influence service quality. From this understanding, County governments should be able to recognize that the kind of people hired by the organization play an important part in providing customer service. The quality of hire, or how important an employee is to a business, can have a direct impact on the level of service delivered to consumers. Hiring policies have a substantial impact on service quality because they shape the capabilities, attitudes, and behaviours of workers who work directly with customers. County governments can raise service standards and differentiate themselves in competitive markets by prioritizing recruitment tactics that focus on staff competency, cultural alignment, training programs, engagement levels, and overall customer perception.

5.2.2 The effect of performance evaluation on service quality

The study aimed to evaluate the effect of performance evaluation on service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The findings show that performance evaluation positively influences service quality. Performance evaluation is critical in determining service

quality within a business, particularly in customer service contexts. Performance evaluation has a direct impact on service quality by offering feedback for improvement, motivating employees, aligning individual performance with organizational goals, identifying training needs, and encouraging accountability among staff members.

5.2.3 The effect of competency development on service quality

In this objective the study aimed to evaluate the effect of competency development on service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The findings show that competency development did not positively influence service quality. While competency development is crucial for improving staff capabilities, the direct impact on service quality can be influenced by a variety of organizational factors. County governments may get the most out of their training investments by tackling these difficulties and focusing on developing synergies between competency development activities and service delivery procedures.

5.2.4 Effect of employee engagement on service quality

In this objective the study aimed to evaluate the effect of employee engagement on service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The findings show that employee engagement positively influences service quality. Employee engagement has a significant impact on service quality within an organization. Employee engagement has a tremendous impact on service quality within a company. When staff are engaged and motivated in their jobs, they are more likely to provide high-quality service to clients. Employee engagement techniques should be prioritized by county governments since they have a significant impact on service quality within

organizations. By building an engagement culture, county governments can empower their staff to provide superior services that meet or exceed customer expectations.

5.2.5 Moderating Effect of organizational culture on the relationship between hiring practices and service quality

The study aimed to investigate the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between recruitment practices and service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The study discovered that while organizational culture is widely recognized as a major element in moderating the association between hiring practices and service quality, its efficiency in doing so varies depending on internal dynamics within an organization. Addressing difficulties such as misaligned expectations, inconsistent implementation, and reluctance to change is critical for optimizing the potential moderating effect of organizational culture on service quality through strategic recruiting practices.

5.2.6 Moderating Effect of organizational culture on the relationship between competency development and service quality

The study aimed to investigate the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between recruitment practices and service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The results indicated that the conditional effect of organizational culture on competency development and service quality was significant. The study found that organizational culture plays a significant role in moderating the relationship between competency development and service quality. By fostering a positive culture that supports competency development and aligns with organizational goals, county governments can enhance their service quality outcomes.

5.2.7 Moderating Effect of organizational culture on the relationship between performance evaluation and service quality

The study aimed to investigate the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between performance evaluation and service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The results indicated that the conditional effect of organizational culture on performance evaluation and service quality was significant. The research discovered that an organizational culture that prioritizes steady enhancements, collaboration, and customer centricity can amplify the impact of job performance reviews on service excellence. In these types of cultures, workers are more likely to see performance assessments as prospects for personal growth rather than just evaluations of their work. In contrast, a weak or harmful organizational culture can impede the effectiveness of performance reviews in improving service quality. If employees distrust the evaluation system or feel discouraged by it, they may not be willing to make the necessary advancements in their customer service. In such climates, even top-performing staff may find it difficult to uphold service quality benchmarks. Therefore, county governments looking to enhance service quality through performance reviews must comprehend the moderating effect of organizational culture. By promoting a constructive culture that aligns with the objectives of performance evaluations, organizations can build an environment where employees feel driven to excel in their jobs and deliver phenomenal service to customers.

5.2.8 Moderating Effect of organizational culture on the relationship between employee engagement and service quality

The study aimed to investigate the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between employee engagement and service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The results indicated that the conditional effect of organizational culture on

employee engagement and service quality was significant. Organizational culture can act as a moderator in the relationship between employee engagement and service quality. A supportive culture can increase the benefits of employee engagement for service quality. For example, in firms where cooperation is highly valued (part of the organizational culture), engaged employees are more likely to work together effectively to provide superior service. On the other hand, a hostile or unsupportive business culture can reduce the influence of staff engagement on service quality. If employees do not feel appreciated or empowered as a result of negative cultural norms, their level of engagement may fall, resulting in a drop in service quality despite their initial excitement. This study found that organizational culture has an important moderating effect in determining how employee engagement affects service quality within a business. A positive culture can reinforce the favourable benefits of engaged staff in service delivery, while a negative culture can undermine these effects.

5.3 Study Implications

The diagnosis of study results reveals reliable and valid results that can be adopted into theoretical, methodological, policy and practical implications that can be used by county governments to improve service quality.

5.3.1 Theoretical implication

Service quality, organizational culture, employee engagement, competency development, performance evaluation, and hiring practices are crucial aspects of organizational management that significantly impact the overall success and sustainability of a business. The theoretical implications of studies in these areas provide valuable insights into how organizations can enhance their operations,

improve employee satisfaction and performance, and ultimately achieve their strategic objectives. The study provides valuable guidance for organizations seeking to enhance their operational effectiveness, foster a positive work environment, develop employees' skills and capabilities, evaluate performance fairly, and attract top talent through effective hiring strategies.

5.3.2 Managerial implication

This research makes important practical contributions in addition to its theoretical advancements. Organizations should prioritize delivering superior quality service to customers consistently. This may require investing in training for frontline employees, monitoring customer feedback, and continuously improving service processes. Leaders should cultivate a positive, inclusive organizational culture that promotes collaboration, innovation, and employee engagement. They can do this by facilitating open communication, recognizing and rewarding employee contributions, and aligning company values with employee behaviours.

Organizations should make engaging and motivating employees a priority to boost overall performance and productivity. This could involve providing career development opportunities, fostering a supportive work environment, and incorporating employee feedback. Organizations should develop employees' skills and abilities so they are equipped to handle their job responsibilities. Potential approaches include offering training programs, coaching, mentoring, and promoting a culture of continuous learning.

Organizations should implement fair, transparent performance evaluation processes to accurately assess and provide constructive feedback for improvement. This may involve setting clear expectations, regular reviews, and linking evaluations to rewards

and recognition. Organizations should adopt rigorous hiring practices to attract and retain top talent aligned with organizational values and vision. This could mean developing job profiles that define required competencies and skills, thorough interviewing and assessments, and competitive compensation and benefits.

5.3.3 Policy implication

This study provides several key policy implications: To foster a culture of exceptional service, policymakers should establish clear service standards, train and develop employees on an ongoing basis, and regularly evaluate and improve service quality. Policymakers should make creating and sustaining a positive, inclusive organizational culture that values diversity, collaboration, and employee well-being a priority. This can be done by implementing policies and practices that promote open communication, transparency, and mutual respect among employees. Recognizing that employee engagement boosts organizational performance and success, policymakers should offer competitive compensation and benefits, provide career development and growth opportunities, and build a supportive work environment that values employee contributions.

Policymakers should invest in training and development programs to help employees enhance their skills and competencies. This includes offering continuing education and certification, providing mentoring and coaching, and incentivizing continuous professional development. To ensure fair, transparent performance evaluations aligned with organizational goals and values, policymakers should implement clear evaluation criteria, regularly provide feedback and coaching to employees, and use evaluations to identify areas for improvement. Policymakers should make hiring practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion a priority. This includes

implementing bias-free recruitment, setting clear diversity and inclusion goals, and actively recruiting candidates from underrepresented groups to build a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Studies

This study analyzed the effects of hiring practices, performance evaluations, competency development, and employee engagement on strategic human resource management in a limited way. Focusing only on these aspects narrowed the conceptual scope, as strategic HR is multifaceted, which may have impacted the reliability and generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Future scholars could consider investigating additional variables that may explain more of the variance in service quality, building on this work.

A key limitation was the sole use of quantitative surveys, which allow rapid responses without reflection. As proper interpretation is required for valid responses, and no opportunity for clarification is provided, the results should be viewed cautiously. A mixed methods approach incorporating surveys and structured interviews could provide more clarity on study variables. Interviews can capture in-depth individual perspectives on the variables, complementing the survey data and enhancing reliability. Quantitative and qualitative data could be triangulated to comprehensively address the study objectives and hypotheses. Considering these factors would provide clearer and more accurate results regarding turnover intentions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

I am a master's Student at Moi University and I am conducting a study on **MODERATING EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND SERVICE QUALITY IN ELGEYO MARAKWET COUNTY**. You have been chosen as one of the participants in this research. Please kindly fill out this survey with utmost honesty and accuracy to help me gather data. The information provided will be used solely for academic purposes and will be handled with the utmost confidentiality. Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary, and the questionnaire guarantees complete anonymity. Your assistance in facilitating this research will be greatly valued.

Thank you.

Part A: Background Information

1. Kindly indicate your gender: Male (), Female ()
2. Kindly indicate your age bracket. 21-30 Years () 31-40 Years ()
41-50 Years () 51 – 60 () 61 Years and Above ()
3. What is your highest level of education?
Secondary [] Certificate () Diploma [] University [] Postgraduate []
4. Kindly indicate the number of years you have been employed with the County government; Below 5 years () 6 – 10 years () 11 – 15 years () 16 – 20 years ()
21 years and above ()

Section B: Service Quality

1. The following are statements on Service quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County, County Governments. To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to Service quality using the scale; **1 = Strongly Disagree 2 =Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree**

	Service quality	1	2	3	4	5
	Timeliness					
T1	Service quality at the county is prompt					
T2	There are timestamps for all activities at the county					
T3	There are hardly any complaints about delays by the county in Service Quality					
	Satisfaction					
S1	Customer satisfaction surveys indicate high satisfaction by residents with county services offered					
S2	There are hardly any complaints about the absenteeism rate of the county government employees					
S3	There are defined procedures to define the level of satisfaction expected from all county operations					
	Cost Saving					
CS1	The county hardly loses finances due to the inability of its HR					
CS2	The county recurrent costs are some of the least due to effective work designs					

Section C: Influence of hiring practices on Service Quality

1. The following are statements on hiring practices in Elgeyo Marakwet County, County Governments. To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to hiring practices using the scale; **1 = Strongly Disagree 2 =Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree**

	Hiring Practices	1	2	3	4	5
	Cumulative experiences of employees					
CEE1	All employees have met the qualification requirements for their job descriptions					
CEE2	The hiring process at the county is above board					
CEE3	The county has qualified and sufficient personnel in all its departments					
	Level of target achievement					
LTA1	All employees meet their work goals comfortably					
LTA2	Employees from the county are recognized by the public for exemplary performance					
	Organizational goal achievement					
OGA1	The county processes tasks for the public in time					
OGA2	The county can achieve milestone targets set annually					
OGA3	The county is ranked as a performer by the county residents					

Section D: Effect of performance evaluation on Service quality.

5. The following are statements on performance evaluation in Elgeyo Marakwet County, County Governments. To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to performance evaluation using the scale; **1 = Strongly Disagree 2 =Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree**

	Performance evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
	Satisfaction with Performance Feedback:					
PE1	The feedback I receive helps me understand my strengths and areas of improvement.					
PE2	I feel motivated to perform better when I receive constructive feedback on my work.					
PE3	I have a clear understanding of what is expected of me in my role within the county.					
PE4	The performance expectations set for me are specific and measurable.					
PE5	I receive clear guidance on how to meet the performance expectations of my job.					
PE6	I believe that my performance is evaluated based on objective criteria.					

Section E: Influence of Competency Development on Service Quality

6. The following are statements on competency development in Elgeyo Marakwet County, County Governments. To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to competency development using the scale; **1 = Strongly Disagree 2 =Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree**

	Competency Development	1	2	3	4	5
	Scope of Training					
ST1	Training is conducted by consultants					
	Level of Mentoring					
LM1	The county has a mentorship program for staff					
LM2	Mentorship is conducted for staff who are identified as having a need					
LM3	Mentorship is outsourced to experts					
	Frequency of Workshops					
FW1	There are more than one training workshop annually					
FW2	Departments can request workshops for their staff when the need arises					
FW3	There is a policy to govern workshop frequencies					

Section F: Influence of Employee Engagement Initiatives on Service Quality

2. The following are statements on competency development in Elgeyo Marakwet County, County Governments. To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to Employee Engagement Initiatives using the scale; **1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree**

	Employee Engagement	1	2	3	4	5
	Communication Effectiveness:					
EE1	I receive clear and timely communication from management regarding company goals and objectives.					
EE2	Communication channels within the organization promote open and transparent information flow.					
EE3	Management actively seeks and values employees' input and feedback on important matters.					
	Opportunities for Growth and Development:					
OGD 1	The organization supports my career aspirations and offers opportunities for growth within the company.					
	Recognition and Rewards:					
RR1	The organization recognizes and appreciates my contributions to the success of the company.					
RR2	I receive regular feedback and recognition for my achievements and efforts.					

Section G: Organizational Culture

3. The following are statements on organizational culture in Elgeyo Marakwet County, County Governments. To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to organizational culture using the scale; **1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree**

	Organizational Culture	1	2	3	4	5
	Value					
OC1	Employees are very particular about obeying organizational value					
OC2	The value of the organization takes precedence when setting operational policies					
	Guiding principles					
GP1	The organization has a guiding principle for every practice					
GP2	The principles are enshrined in the HR policies and manuals					
GP3	The principle upholds attitudes and etiquette					
	Communication					
C1	There are flat structures making communication direct					
C2	The county embraces two-way communication					

Appendix II: Authorization Letters



MOI UNIVERSITY
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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

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RE: MU/SBE/PGR/ACD/21B DATE: 28th January, 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

RE: NYANDEGE K. NAOMI - MBA/5817/21

The above named is a bonafide student of Moi University, School of Business & Economics. She is undertaking **Masters in Business Administration (MBA)** degree, specializing in **Human Resource Management**.

Ms. Nyandegge successfully completed coursework and has defended her proposal. She is proceeding to the field to collect data for her research titled: *"Moderating Effect of Organizational Culture on the Relationship Between Strategic Human Resource Management Practices and Service Quality in Elgeyo Marakwet County"*

Any assistance accorded to her will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,



DEAN
 School Of Business and Economics
 MOI UNIVERSITY

PROF. RONALD BONUKE
ASSOCIATE DEAN AND CHAIR-POSTGRADUATE STUDIES


ISO 9001: 2015 Certified Institution



Issue: 06/February/2024



RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Miss. NAOMI KEMUNTO NYANDEGE of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Elgeyo-Marakwet on the topic: **MODERATING EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND SERVICE QUALITY IN ELGEYO MARAKWET COUNTY** for the period ending:

06/February/2025.

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