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The Role of Talent Attraction and Work Engagement on Employee Job Satisfaction: Kenyan Oil and Gas Perspective



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The Role of Talent Attraction and Work Engagement on Employee Job Satisfaction: Kenyan Oil and Gas Perspective



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Abstract

Purpose: The focus of the study was to assess how staff satisfaction in Kenya's oil and gas industry was impacted by the talent attraction through mediation of job engagement.

Methodology: This inquiry used quantitative method and relied on questionnaires to collect data on the research objectives. The positivist philosophy was employed in the study. 281 questionnaires were distributed to employees of 30 Oil Marketing Companies selected using simple random sampling technique. The quantitative information was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings: According to the regression results, there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between talent attraction and work engagement in the petroleum sector. Further, work engagement had a positive and statistically significant impact on work satisfaction. Although not statistically significant, talent attraction had a favourable impact on job satisfaction in the petroleum industry. Finally, the relationship between job satisfaction and talent attractiveness was mediated by work engagement. Thus, the study concluded that a major mediator of the association between job happiness and talent attractiveness was work engagement.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The inquiry recommends oil company management incorporate targeted talent attraction strategies together with engagement opportunities to develop a satisfied workforce. Recruitment processes should communicate the organisation's core values, mission, and long-term goals. Firms should also incorporate value-based assessments and cultural fit evaluations into the recruitment process. Additionally, management should create a meaningful and purpose-driven work environment. Finally, it is imperative that petroleum companies ensure that during recruitment processes, they intentionally target individuals likely to become engaged based on the personality traits, motivation, and values.

Keywords: *Work Engagement, Job Satisfaction, Talent Attraction*

INTRODUCTION

An important factor in the growth and transformation of the Kenyan economy is the oil and gas industry as the country gears towards the achievement of Kenya Vision 2030 goals through the bottom-up economy transformation agenda for inclusive growth. The sector supports the economic pillar by enhancing sustainable development of the extractive industry (Republic of Kenya, 2018). There has been exploration of crude oil within several blocks and the successful initiation and implementation of the Early Oil Pilot Scheme. The use of clean gas for cooking has been encouraged amongst households with the price of the commodity being reduced to make it affordable (Juma, 2020). Infrastructure development in the sector has contributed significantly to the annual growth of Gross Domestic Product.

The industry has three phases; the upstream sector in its nascent stage with ongoing exploration in ninety-four wells in the sedimentary basins of Lamu, Tertiary Rift, Anza and Mandera (Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority, 2024). In contrast, the midstream phase entails bulk storage of imported petroleum products awaiting distribution through the road or pipeline transport system (Nzioki, 2023). The downstream sector is active with numerous employees who work to supply the products to customers in various parts of the country. Additionally, there are several SMEs involved in the petroleum supply chain, which drives the socio economic development of Kenya. The employees in these companies are the key drivers to efficient delivery of products to customers, hence their needs should be sated (Mbaki, 2019).

The sector makes a substantial contribution to the world economy, specifically with Malaysia being the second largest player in Southeast Asia as observed by Salleh et al. (2024). The sector employs many people, hence building the economy of the nation and securing the national energy. The success of this sector depends heavily on attracting, retaining and making the employees satisfied. The sector's workload is high and stressful, with strict professional settings which can adversely affect employees. Companies, therefore, need to manage their employees' satisfaction through various strategies to ensure maximum productivity (Salleh et al., 2024). They also posit that the industry provides lucrative job opportunities, hence affecting job satisfaction as demonstrated by studies conducted in Saudi Arabia, India and Egypt.

The management of the workforce is a key factor in ensuring productivity in companies. Consequently, the company's first line of defence is attracting top talent with the necessary abilities and attitude. When assigned to the accurate roles, the organisational goals and performance are easily achieved (Otonnah & Bagshaw, 2023). The authors further note that skilled employees bring in fresh perspectives, which makes the company stand out and enhances its reputation, making it an appealing employer. Talent attraction, therefore, contributes to the success of the organisation and its long-term sustainability.

However, the petroleum industry in general has challenging goals and the nature of operations results in frequent staff turnover (Salleh et al., 2024). Similarly, Ibrahim and Hussein (2024) add

that work in the industry is challenging and hazardous with high occupational risks and safety concerns for the employees. Further, employees in this industry are constantly under pressure to fulfil deadlines, adhere to stringent safety regulations, and stay up to date with changing market conditions and emerging technologies. This requires companies to develop a resilient workforce that is well-engaged and satisfied with their work for productivity to be achieved (Ibrahim & Hussein, 2024).

Leaders can enhance job satisfaction at the oil companies through talent management tactics like balancing workload, supporting the employees and availing growth opportunities, which will also enhance talent retention (Salleh et al., 2024). Conversely, work engagement raises employees' feelings of purpose and belonging inside the organisation, which leads to high job satisfaction. The two concepts of talent attraction and work engagement, therefore, contribute immensely to employees' job satisfaction (Hasan & Sadat, 2023). Consequently, companies should put in place talent attraction strategies to pull in a workforce that is skilled. Once in the company, the workforce should be continually engaged in their tasks to enhance their satisfaction as a culture. Firms can establish a fun and productive workplace that benefits both the organisation and its workers (Van Tuin et al., 2021).

Talent Attraction

Talent attraction is a key concept in talent management that companies use to hire the right skilled employees aligned with the particular roles and the cultural system. Organisations cannot succeed without attracting the right talent, nurturing and retaining it. Talent attraction involves recruitment, selection, induction and placement of the workforce, who are the key asset in the organisation (Sharma, 2025). Rahman et al. (2025) notes that various initiatives are used to attract talent namely; branding, data analytics and social media. Companies should establish a powerful brand that reflects their own culture, core values, and prospects for expansion. Mishra and Gupta (2024) supports this position, noting that employees are drawn to companies with a good reputation, which comes through an organisation's emphasis on staff development. Additionally, effective recruitment policies should be put in place for the selection of the right candidates with adequate skills, competencies and cultural fit. Potential employees should therefore be assessed based on various rubrics. Cultural fit includes values, behaviour, and style of work, which should be looked at apart from the skills, experience and qualification.

Competitive packages should be offered to employees to motivate them to join and stay in the company. Further, a conducive environment where employees are able to engage freely enhances satisfaction. Therefore, the company should know the needs of the intended candidates beforehand and align its initiatives to recruit and keep talent. Similarly, the face value of the company to the world determines its ability to attract external talent how the candidates view the company (Sorn et al., 2023). Otonnah and Bagshaw (2023) in their study established that talent attraction improved the sustainability of the Multinational oil companies in Nigeria. They recommend companies to

provide their employees with a good salary package, benefits and other incentives as per the industry regulations to attract and retain top talent.

Attracting and retaining talent is a challenging task due to the global talent competition, shortage of skills, which requires companies to up their game in order to satisfy the workforce's changing needs (Mishra, 2024). The scholar recommends utilising AI and technology in the hiring process as it eases tracking applications for candidates. Al Daraai (2025) adds that the oil industry has had difficulties attracting talented workers due to aging staff, lack of qualified candidates, globalization, and the challenge of acquiring entry-level personnel. The industry requires competent staff; thus, companies need to market themselves as ideal employers, especially with the change in generational needs of prospective employees. The author notes that after attracting the talent, the company should identify, develop and keep talent to increase company productivity (Al Daraai, 2025).

Acquisition of talent is key for organisational success of SMEs in Nigeria, given the competitive environment as revealed by Udegbunam et al. (2024). They proposed tailored strategies to attract talent, namely fostering growth opportunities, employer branding, use of targeted platforms, experienced candidates, and unique benefits, all aligned with the organisational goals. They further add that there should be stakeholder collaboration to establish a supportive atmosphere for managing and developing talent that will foster the growth of the economy of Nigeria (Udegbunam et al., 2024). Conversely, Osaro (2016) notes that identification of talented employees is done within the company, whereas the attraction of elites is done externally. Employees have varied capabilities, weaknesses, and characteristics which should be identified and managed by the company. These differences should be applied in an appropriate way to benefit the company through diversity management. Further, Friday and Sunday (2019) note that hiring, selection, company branding, and employee value proposition are all components of attracting talent. Talents can be recruited internally or externally, though most companies prefer internally as the employees already possess knowledge of the business operations. Others prefer external recruitment as it brings in radical change and renews the organisational culture.

In addition, talent attraction can be attained through flexible working times, which gives employees a fulfilling balance between family and work (Ardi et al., 2024). They state that remote working is envied by talented employees who require fulfilling roles. The individuals can pick the time they are productive to work and slot the remaining time between their families and other duties. Moreover, when companies eliminate regional employment barriers, they can attract a wide range of qualified employees from other continents who can work remotely. Alanazi (2020) observes that talent attraction is a key element in talent management as it enables an organisation to identify and select skilled candidates. This is affected by the characteristics of the organisation, the job role and the hiring process. Recruitment involves advertising, maintaining the applicant's status through sustaining their interest in the company, and lastly shaping their decision. Of

importance is the information provided to the applicant, their compatibility with the company's values and reputation. The company should therefore ensure that the recruitment process depicts it as an employer of choice (Alanazi, 2020).

Talent attraction is also affected by the perception of the applicants on how they can fit into the company. Individuals desire to have a social sense of belonging in their place of work. Potential employees, therefore, seek opportunities that will enhance their status, resulting in a strong brand value and enhanced social identity (Alanazi, 2020). Both employer and employee can aid in the attraction of potential talent. The employer can offer career progression, good pay, challenging work, organisational support, good reputation, an ideal company's mission, vision and values, job security and learning opportunities. The prioritisation of these items may differ from company to company, and also based on the employees' perspective, as this will attract talent (Alanazi, 2020).

Work engagement

Work engagement involves the ability of the human capital in an organisation to be motivated enough to work towards attaining the organisational objectives at an economic and strategic level (Barakat et al., 2025). It is also a constructive mental state that is demonstrated through vigour, determination, and absorption at work. Vigour refers to an employee's high level of energy and mental toughness, which prepares them to work harder and deal with demanding situations. Dedication, is the enthusiasm and devotion to work that an employee has and is manifested through pride, relevance and inspiration to work. Lastly, absorption is the state where an employee at work is fully engrossed in their work and does not realise how time goes by (Barakat et al., 2025).

Companies should ensure that their employees at work are fully present in body and mind. As demonstrated by Kahn in 1990, employees articulate themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally through their tasks (Goni, 2025). The employees should be committed and enthusiastic to perform their tasks as expected of them. They should be provided with a conducive work environment, recognition, growth opportunities and feedback (Mohammed et al., 2023; Mishra, 2024). According to Mishra (2024), employee engagement is the emotional dedication and commitment of workers to the organisation's goals and core values. Employees who are engaged give the organisation an advantageous competitive advantage through high productivity and high staff retention. It also enhances the degree to which workers are dedicated to their company and improves customers' loyalty and stakeholder engagement (Goni et al., 2023).

A company has several employees with different personalities and innovations. Hence, management has to identify ways of ensuring that employees are engaged as per their personalities to retain talent. Engaged employees, become satisfied and inspired to achieve the organisational objectives. Companies should therefore develop a positive work culture that encourages engagement through its leadership, roles, capability and systems (Goni et al., 2023). Employee engagement encompasses talent engagement and deals with how workers relate, bond with their roles and dedication to the company goals. Skilful workers should be enticed to gain their

commitment to the company's objectives and standards (Anas & Isichei, 2024). They further add that more emphasis should be put on talent engagement, which is a strategy used by companies to connect with prospective employees through strategic communication with the goal of gaining and retaining their interest in the company.

Employees, through engagement, can perceive work as an enjoyable process; they go to work with enthusiasm and joy as partakers in advancing the company, leading to a progressive organisational outcome like job happiness and retention of employees. Work engagement is important for both the employee and the company as it improves employees' motivation and commitment to the company (Ibrahim & Hussein, 2024). Besides, it enhances the resilience of employees, resulting in work satisfaction and acts as a protective element. Furthermore, employees who are engaged connect to the company, and they work easily as they are motivated to and willing to help the company succeed.

Additionally, employees exhibit positive behaviour and attitude towards their work and the relevance of their company (Mohammad et al., 2023). Kustiawan et al. (2022) adds that engaged staff are proactive problem solvers, collaborative, over time helping co-workers, sharing knowledge, fostering creativity, praising the company and participating in organisational dialogue. The company, on the other hand, will promote two-way interaction between itself and the workers (Mohammad et al., 2023). Staff engagement is evaluated by how the employee links up with their colleagues and supervisors, and secondly by how they use their expertise at work and their job security.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to the level of contentment that workers have with their employment. This can be achieved through good salaries, recognition a positive work atmosphere, and a healthy balance of work and life (Mohammed et al., 2023). High job satisfaction levels lead to low employee turnover and high performance. Omosa et al. (2024) notes that job satisfaction is an abstract construct that cannot be quantified, though it is necessary as employees' attitudes and perceptions toward work are essential for quality output. Similarly, Goni et al. (2023) terms job satisfaction as an intangible concept that can be observed or expressed via emotive feelings. It gives rise to responses from employees which can be cognitively or emotively expressed in terms of revulsion or liking towards something. It is derived from meeting of personal needs, job practices and the approach used by management.

Job satisfaction is a multifaceted concept critical to the success of the organisation. This is because employees who are content with their job will be loyal, perform well and stay in the company. If they are not happy, they will underperform as their loyalty declines, and they will leave the company when an opportunity arises (Omosa et al., 2024). Goni et al. (2023) add that job satisfaction arises from attaining something productive for which an employee is compensated. The feeling for a task can be positive or detrimental depending on the needs and opportunities

availed to the employee. Salleh et al. (2024) posit that work satisfaction is a personal total appraisal of work circumstances and consists of both positive and negative aspects. Further, it as a mediating factor of work-related elements and employees' behaviour such as absenteeism, performance and intention to leave (Chavadi et al., 2022).

Flexible work plans, fair recruitment, promotion, organisational culture, open communication, management support, and job security enhance employees' satisfaction. Higher job satisfaction leads to high performance, low absenteeism and high retention. Pay, supervision, reliable rewards, benefits, operational procedures, communication, nature of work, colleagues, among others (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Job satisfaction determines how workers perceive their roles and the firm. Companies can use this to assess employees' well being as a contented employee is crucial for productivity, efficacy and high performance. This is also determined by the workplace environment (Altomonte et al., 2019). The aspect of belonging to a company also enhances job satisfaction. The sense of fulfilment, professional growth, workplace challenges and appreciation from customers lead to individual aspiration (Omosa et al., 2024). There are various components around an employee that affect job satisfaction. These include the nature of how the employees perceive their work. The values held determines how they accomplish their tasks. The work environment also influences the relationship the employee will have with others at work, their alertness at work, the fairness they receive and the compensation. There is also the social influence that affect the employee attitudes arising from fellow workers or the team they work in (Goni et al., 2023).

Job satisfaction is a contributor to employees staying in the organisation and their commitment and loyalty; hence, it should be taken care of by the company as a priority area. Satisfied employees perform well and are dedicated to their roles paralleled to unsatisfied ones (Anas & Isichei, 2024). It is the employees' state of mind towards work and can be favourable or unfavourable towards their entire tasks. It also entails the health, safety and welfare of the employee in the company and everything associated with their work. It is the feeling that the employee has towards their job. The surrounding factors at work will affect how the employee views their job, whether positively or negatively (Anas & Isichei, 2024). They further note that highly trained employees and in particular women seemed to have high satisfaction. Employees with talent or expertise were happy, whereas employees of lower ranks were unhappy. Similar to this, workers who received higher compensation, a better work environment, and a larger welfare package reported feeling very satisfied with their jobs. Therefore, job happiness can influence talent engagement to increase public sector employees' organisational commitment.

Additionally, Memon et al. (2021) evaluated how satisfied workers were with their jobs in the Malaysian petroleum sector through to talent management measures like compensation, performance reviews, and training. The inquiry looked at how work engagement mediated employee turnover intention and satisfaction. It was revealed that training gratification affected

work engagement, with employees' positive feelings towards training initiatives positively impacting their engagement at work. Similarly, satisfaction with performance appraisal was established as a strong determinant of job engagement. Feedback on the appraisal process motivated employees to do their work enthusiastically, with its absence leading to deteriorating performance (Memon et al., 2021). Conversely, it was determined that work engagement is unaffected by pay satisfaction, which was attributed to changing values of the workforce who no longer consider financial motives as a concern, as they are highly educated.

Further, the inquiry revealed that work engagement negatively influenced turnover intention. Due to their attachment to their roles and organisation, actively involved employees are unlikely to leave (Memon et al., 2021). Additionally, the relationship between turnover intention and satisfaction (training and appraisal) is mediated by engagement at work. The affirmative perception of talent management role in terms of training opportunities and the performance appraisal process, which improves employees' engagement at work, hence giving them energy and enthusiasm as they perform their roles. Such engaged employees will act and think positively and will not search for prospects outside the company. Nevertheless, the relationship between pay satisfaction and the intention to leave was not mediated by work engagement (Memon et al., 2021). On the other hand, Salleh et al. (2024) state that in Malaysia's energy industry, work satisfaction mediated workload, job advancement, manager social support, and retention relations.

Similarly, a study of the Malaysian petroleum sector established that employee job happiness was positively influenced by perks and incentives, innovative work procedures, sustainability and digitalisation, which are key in the post-COVID era (Bawazir et al., 2024). They propose management to improve working conditions and adapt to changing employee demands. Comprehensive plans should be in place to handle the various facets of the workplace. Riyanto et al. (2021) reports that an employee's pleasant feelings or sense of comfort at work or with relation to their work constitute job satisfaction. It is an emotional phenomenon that makes an employee want to do things that help the company reach its objectives.

All things considered, the three ideas of attracting talent, engaging employees, and ensuring job satisfaction are interconnected and essential to the organisation's success. High levels of employee engagement and efficient and successful talent recruitment lead to motivated staff members and high levels of job satisfaction (Mohammad et al., 2023).

Statement of the problem

There are a lot of factors, both internal and external, that affect the operations of an organisation, depending on the specific industry. In this regard, companies should be prepared to handle all foreseen and unforeseen circumstances that may occur during their operations. Employees are the anchor critical for the growth of any given organisation. Due to globalisation and innovation, which are taking place at an exponential pace, employees' needs keep changing depending on the environment, and it becomes challenging for the oil companies to attract talent (Osaro, 2016). In

this regard, companies should anticipate and devise attraction strategies to fill roles and alleviate stress from the already employed workers. The strategies should also be able to withstand the volatility in the industry. Ibrahim & Hussein (2024) point out that while there are many studies comparing job satisfaction and work engagement across a range of industries, there is a deficiency in the oil and gas sector. Additionally, Pradhan et al. (2019) notes that there are few studies on job satisfaction, work engagement, and talent management.

In the Kenyan arena, numerous studies have been done on the acquisition of talent, work engagement and satisfaction on separate capacities, not the interrelation that this study seeks to fill. Companies face challenges in terms of attracting staff, engaging their staff and ensuring a high degree of satisfaction. Given that employees have different values, maintaining an equilibrium for all three factors is challenging for organisations, especially those in the petroleum sector. These aspects remain unexplored in the petroleum field. The petroleum sector in Kenya faces significant challenges, among them job satisfaction, low engagement and workforce retention, which derails attraction despite the growth in the sector. The field has aged workers who are almost retiring.

Objectives of the study

To determine how talent attraction and work engagement influence workers job satisfaction in the Kenyan petroleum sector using the following specific objectives;

1. To establish the influence of talent attraction on job satisfaction.
2. To evaluate the mediating role of work engagement on talent attraction and job satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

This research is founded on the social exchange theory (SET), which sustains the relation and transaction between two parties, that is, the employer and employee. The employee receives social, developmental, application, safety, and economic value from the employer's package of compensation, bonuses, welfare benefits, and values (Kilroy et al., 2023). The study uses the theory, to investigate the relationship between work engagement, job satisfaction, and talent recruitment. SET posits that social behaviour results from an exchange process that aims to minimise costs and maximize gains (Yamao, 2024). The idea explains how the reciprocal interactions between employers and employees impact employee attitudes and behaviour in organisational contexts.

Talent attraction as the initiating exchange factor in high-performing organisations is done through a competitive organisational culture. These practices signal to potential workers that the organisation is committed to creating value for employees. This involves imparting high-stakes incentives, notice the organisation conveys its values to potential talent, hence establishing a positive exchange that opens the door to commitment and satisfaction. Employees then assess the

organisation's ongoing fulfilment of the psychological contract with work engagement acting as the mediator. Positive HR practices, rewards, and career development cause an obligation, leading employees to repay with work engagement. Involved employees are characterised by energy, commitment, and absorption in the workplace (Schaufeli et al., 2002) reflecting their position in the ongoing exchange relationship.

As such, job engagement mediates talent attraction and work satisfaction because the perception by employees of organisational support influences the level at which they are willing to put energy and commitment to (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Job happiness is a result of successful exchanges; workers who perceive that their effort is valued and compensated will be contented with their work (Yamao, 2024). This contentment is an emotional response to fair and rewarding interactions at the workplace. Alternatively, if workers perceive inequity in the exchange relationship, dissatisfaction and withdrawal behaviour may result.

Talent attraction and job satisfaction

The relationship between job satisfaction and talent management (attracting, developing, and retaining talent) of commercial bank employees was investigated in Jordan. The study used 256 participants who filled questionnaires, whose data was analysed through multiple regression. The results showed that job satisfaction is improved by talent management programs. However, talent attraction as a component did not have a statistical significance on employee job satisfaction, contrary to many studies (Almomani et al., 2022).

Attraction of talent is the first step in the application of talent management tools. It contains recruitment and selection of talented people to fill vacancies in the organisation. An organisation must attract the right employees who will lead to the sustainable success of the organisation through creativity. Therefore, in order to hire the best people competitively, firms should create specialized talent acquisition processes (Saleh & Atan, 2021). Using culture as a mediating factor, the researchers assessed how long-term talent management programs affected workers' job satisfaction in Lebanese universities. 200 respondents were chosen at random to complete the survey, and the data analysed using the model of structural equations. Organisational culture acted as a mediator between happiness at work and the talent management techniques, which included knowledge sharing, career advancement, training for employees, and talent recruitment. The results show that job fulfilment and sustainable methods for talent administration are strongly positively correlated. Conversely, the association between job satisfaction and talent management activities was mediated by organisational culture. Thus, the study found that job satisfaction is positively impacted by talent recruitment (Saleh & Atan, 2021).

Further, Güll et al. (2023) undertook an investigation to determine the relationship between nurses' organisational commitment, work satisfaction, and talent management. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, single linear regression analysis, and a hierarchical regression approach were used to analyse the data from the correlational study, which involved 482 individuals. Attracting,

developing, and retaining talent were all part of talent management, and both intrinsic and external factors affected satisfaction. Conversely, commitment encompassed normative, affective, and continuation components. The study found that talent management had a positive impact on job satisfaction.

The mediating effect of work engagement between talent attraction and job satisfaction

The optimum implementation of extensive talent attraction strategies amongst other talent management initiatives lead to direct and indirect job outcomes, with job satisfaction as the mediating factor. In the Indonesian public transportation sector, Azmy (2023) investigated the use of talent management as a mediating factor between job happiness and employee engagement, which had a favourable impact on the sector. The application of talent techniques guided the employees to achieve the best through placement and provision of a conducive work environment. They note that companies should encourage employees to actively participate in the companies' undertakings and consider their needs to encourage satisfaction and high productivity.

A study to assess the direct and indirect relationships involving talent management, staff engagement, performance, and contentment among NGOs' employees in Pakistan, was carried out by Hakro et al. (2022). According to the study, personnel management included career management, engagement, growth, and retention. The relationship between talent management and work satisfaction was found to be favourably mediated by employee. The workforce, when exposed to talent management strategies, remained engaged and satisfied with the organisation, which ends up being the employer of choice for potential job seekers. The scholars note that job happiness and involvement are interconnected to talent management.

In contrast, Hartanto and Nawangsari (2024) assessed talent management and balance between work and life in relation to staff involvement through the mediation of job satisfaction. They point out that the success of an organisation depends on its employees' engagement. Questionnaires were utilised to gather data from a sample of 97 participants. PLS analysis of the data showed that job satisfaction and talent management had a beneficial impact on employee engagement. Thus, the relationship between employee engagement and talent management was positively mediated by work satisfaction. This study used job satisfaction as the mediating factor and not work engagement as in the current study.

In a study on the Indian public sector, 393 participants answered questions about job satisfaction, work involvement, and talent management (Pradhan et al., 2019). Satisfaction at work was found to be favourably correlated with human resource approaches. The interaction between HR procedures and work satisfaction was favourably mediated by employee engagement. The scholars contend that HR initiatives increase workers' engagement with their jobs, which in turn boosts their level of personal fulfilment. The programs boost employees' vitality and increase their levels of motivation and contentment. Similarly, Goestjahjanti et al. (2020) found that the relationship

between work satisfaction and talent management was positively mediated by workers' engagement. However, they point out that there are rare research examining these three factors.

The variables of the study are; talent attraction - as the independent variable, work engagement – as the mediating variable and lastly, job satisfaction - as the dependent variable.

METHODOLOGY

The study's goal was to determine how employee job satisfaction in the petroleum industry was impacted by talent attraction and engagement. For this reason, quantitative research was adopted in the study with the positivist philosophy and deductive approach. Self-administered questionnaires were used to gather data. AMOS and SPSS were used for the analysis. The study's target population was made up of Kenyan petroleum industry workers. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 281 was chosen to complete the surveys, and 269 valid responses were obtained. Simple random sampling, also known as probability sampling, was used to choose the sample. The questionnaire queries were adapted from Bonneton et al. (2022) and Ishiyama (2022), Schaufeli et al. (2002), and Redondo et al. (2021) for talent attraction, work engagement and job satisfaction respectively. Over time, the authenticity and credibility have been examined.

RESULTS

A total of 281 survey questionnaires were distributed to participants out of which 269 were sufficiently filled and deemed suitable for data analysis. According to the criteria established by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), who assert that a response rate of at least 70% is adequate for additional analysis in survey research, the resultant response rate of 95.7% is considered satisfactory. Cronbach's Alpha was utilised in the study to assess the administered questionnaire's reliability. Cronbach's Alpha scores surpassed 0.7 for the constructs indicated that all were reliable. As a result, the study found that the questionnaire used to gather data as trustworthy and suitable for this use.

Descriptive Analysis

The data includes responses from 269 participants across three key statements related to talent attraction, work engagement and job satisfaction with ratings going from 1 (extremely small extent) to 7 (extremely large extent). The analysis below interprets both the mean scores and percentage distributions per item. In Table 1, a substantial majority of respondents (74.7%) rated this statement at 5 or above, indicating a strong perception that the organisation was an attractive employer at the time of application. The relatively high mean (5.23) reinforces this positive sentiment. A strong majority (75.1%) indicated they experienced a high selective recruitment procedure (ratings of 5 –7). The mean of 5.25 suggests a high perceived selectivity in the organisation's hiring approach, supporting the notion of rigorous talent acquisition. The majority of respondents (71.0%) felt recognised as part of a talent pool (ratings 5–7), though this percentage is slightly lower compared to the previous two statements. The mean score (5.13) indicates a

generally positive, though slightly less strong, perception of talent recognition within the organisation. All three items reported mean values above 5.0, suggesting a generally positive perception of the organisation's talent attraction efforts. The responses indicate: high employer attractiveness, rigorous recruitment processes, and recognition of employees as talent. These results point to a well-established employer branding and talent management strategy. However, the organisation may explore ways to improve the visibility and communication of its internal talent pool recognition systems to further strengthen employee engagement.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Talent Attraction

Statements	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	7 (%)	Mean
N = 269								
TA1	2.2	1.9	3.3	17.8	32.7	21.9	20.1	5.23
TA2	2.6	2.6	6.3	13.4	27.9	24.9	22.3	5.25
TA3	3	3.3	7.1	15.6	25.7	26	19.3	5.13

The data also captures employee responses to 8 statements related to work engagement, each rated on a 7- point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7. The analysis below interprets the results both in relation to mean scores and percentage trends (Table 2). A strong majority (77.3%) felt energetic and physically engaged, suggesting high physical work engagement ($\mu=5.57$). Most (68.4%) employees felt capable of sustaining effort, though slightly lower than other engagement dimensions ($\mu=5.35$). High levels (76.9%) of mental resilience were reported, indicating strong cognitive engagement ($\mu= 5.59$). A significant proportion (79.1%) looked forward to work, suggesting intrinsic motivation and emotional readiness ($\mu= 5.64$). Pride in one's work was the highest-rated statement (82.6%), reflecting strong identification with one's job role ($\mu = 5.77$). A good majority (73.2%) find inspiration in their jobs, although less than pride or energy dimensions ($\mu = 5.52$). A high percentage (82.5%) of employees associated their work with meaning and purpose, supporting strong affective engagement ($\mu = 5.73$). Enthusiasm is consistently high (75.8%), indicating positive emotional commitment to work ($\mu = 5.62$). The overall findings indicate strong levels of work engagement across all dimensions (mean > 5.0 in every case). The highest engagement is observed in: Pride in work, Sense of meaning and Willingness to go to work in the morning. This implies that workers are not just dedicated to their roles cognitively and emotionally but also find purpose and satisfaction in their jobs.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Work Engagement

Questions	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	7 (%)	μ
N = 269								
WE1	0.0	1.1	3.7	17.8	23	23.4	30.9	5.57
WE2	1.5	1.5	5.9	22.7	19.7	17.8	30.9	5.35
WE3	1.1	1.5	7.1	13.4	17.8	22.7	36.4	5.59
WE4	0.7	1.1	4.5	14.5	20.8	23.4	34.9	5.64
WE5	0.0	1.1	3.3	13	21.6	22.3	38.7	5.77
WE6	0.7	1.5	5.9	18.6	18.2	19.7	35.3	5.52
WE7	0.4	2.2	4.1	10.8	24.5	16	42	5.73
WE8	0.0	1.5	4.5	18.2	18.6	20.4	36.8	5.62

Table 3 indicates that the majority of survey participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with their jobs, as evidenced by 81 percent of respondents reporting this sentiment ($\mu = 5.61$). Furthermore, 75.8% of participants ($\mu = 5.84$) agreed with the statement that respondents would suggest their jobs to friends. Additionally, a sizable percentage of respondents (75.7%) said their jobs fulfilled their expectations ($\mu = 5.38$). All things considered, 76.9 percent of respondents expressed job satisfaction ($\mu = 5.49$).

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Job Satisfaction

Questions	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	7 (%)	μ
N = 269								
JS1	1.1	1.1	4.1	12.6	16	40.1	24.9	5.61
JS2	0.0	1.1	2.2	9.7	17.5	37.5	32	5.84
JS3	1.9	3.7	5.6	13	20.1	31.2	24.5	5.38
JS4	1.1	3.3	7.1	11.5	16.7	31.6	28.6	5.49

Structural Equation Modelling

In order to investigate how employee job satisfaction in Kenyan petroleum businesses is impacted by talent acquisition and work engagement, the study used structural equation modelling. To determine whether the data was suitable for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were employed. Job satisfaction, work engagement, and talent attraction all had KMO values of 0.836, 0.913, and 0.717, respectively. Additionally, as shown in Table 4, the p-value from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was less than the 0.05 significance level. As a result, structural equation modelling (SEM) was considered suitable for testing the null hypothesis.

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test of Adequacy

	Talent Attraction	Work engagement	Job satisfaction
KMO	.717	.913	836
Bartlett's test	Chi square	307.185	580.716
	p-value	.000	.000

The principle component analysis was applied to load factors. Work engagement ranged from 0.648 to 0.790, job satisfaction ranged from 0.680 to 0.771, and talent attraction factor loadings ranged from 0.846 to 0.872, according to the results shown in Table 5. Therefore, only the factors loading that were higher than the 0.6 minimum threshold were kept for path analysis.

Table 5: Rotated Component Matrix

	Component	1	2	3
TA1		.846		
TA2		.872		
TA3		.846		
WE2			.682	
WE3			.648	
WE4			.694	
WE5			.717	
WE6			.754	
WE8			.759	
WE9			.790	
WE10			.732	
JS1				.735
JS2				.680
JS3				.771
JS4				.725

At a significance level of 0.05, the regression weights shown in Table 6 and Figure 1 showed that the constructs of job satisfaction and talent attraction were significantly represented by their corresponding indicators. Additionally, the study evaluated at the null hypothesis, which states that talent attraction has no discernible impact on job satisfaction. The results indicated that, although not statistically significant, the impact of talent attraction on job satisfaction in the petroleum industry was positive ($\beta=.149$, t -value = 1.849, $P>0.05$). Consequently, null hypothesis was approved, suggesting that job satisfaction was not much impacted by talent recruitment.

According to the effect, job satisfaction increased by .149 units for every unit rise in talent attraction.

Table 6: Effect of talent attraction on Job satisfaction

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Job satisfaction	<---	Talent Attraction	.149	.081	1.849	.064
JS1	<---	Job _ satisfaction	.764	.065	11.759	***
JS2	<---	Job _ satisfaction	.571	.058	9.909	***
JS3	<---	Job_ satisfaction	1.000			
JS4	<---	Job_ satisfaction	.899	.075	12.009	***
TA1	<---	Talent Attraction	.987	.086	11.466	***
TA2	<---	Talent Attraction	1.104	.096	11.511	***
TA3	<---	Talent Attraction	1.000			

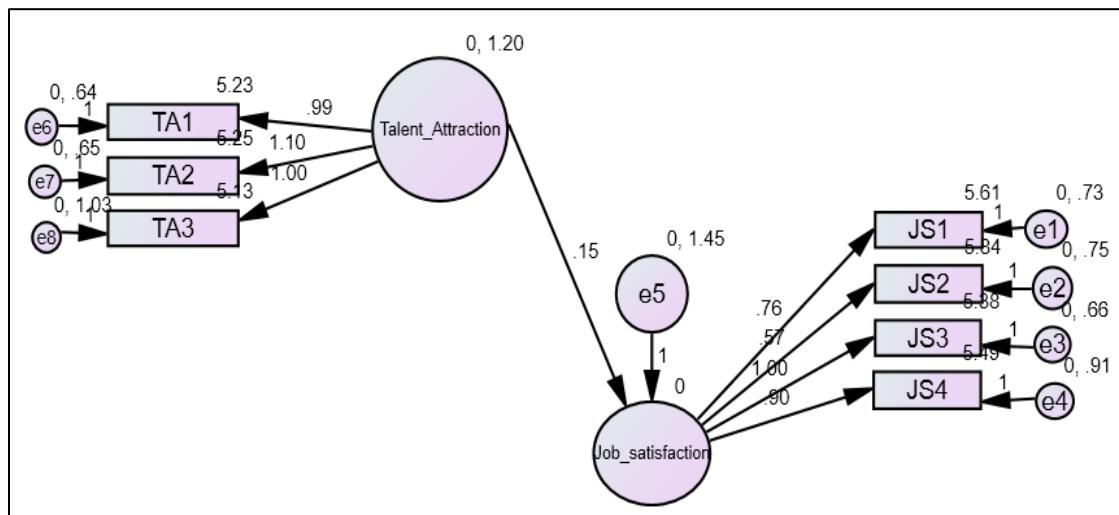


Figure 1: SEM for Talent Attraction and Job satisfaction

Convergent validity was confirmed by the regression weights shown in Table 7 and Figure 2, which showed that the constructs of job happiness, work engagement, and talent attraction were significantly represented by their corresponding indicators at a 0.05 significance level. The study also investigated at the null hypothesis, which states that work engagement has no mediating role in the relationship between job satisfaction and talent. In the petroleum industry, attracting talent had a negative and non-significant direct impact on job satisfaction ($\beta = -.016$, t -value = -.288, $P > 0.05$). On the other hand, there was a positive and statistically significant impact of talent attraction on job engagement ($\beta = .246$, $t = 3.681$, p -value < 0.05). Finally, it was determined that work engagement had a positive and substantial effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = .541$, t -value = 7.589, $p < 0.05$).

The indirect impact of talent management on job satisfaction through work engagement was positive and statistically significant, despite the limited direct effect of talent attraction on job happiness. Furthermore, it was determined that the direct effect of talent attraction on job satisfaction was (-.016), and the indirect effect on job satisfaction through work engagement was (.246 *.541 = 0.133). Thus, the sum of the direct and indirect effects was used to calculate the overall effect of talent attraction on job satisfaction (.133 + -.016 =.117), showing that a one-unit increase in talent attraction resulted in a 0.117-unit rise in overall job satisfaction. Consequently, null hypothesis was disproved, suggesting that in a Kenyan petroleum company, work engagement acted as a mediator in the relationship between job satisfaction and talent attraction.

Table 7: Mediating effect of Work Engagement on the relationship between talent Attraction and job satisfaction

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Work __ Engagement	<---	Talent _ Attraction	.246	.067	3.681	***
Job _ satisfaction	<---	Talent _ Attraction	-.016	.057	-.288	.773
Job _ satisfaction	<---	Work __ Engt	.541	.071	7.589	***
JS1	<---	Job _ satisfaction	1.000			
JS2	<---	Job _ satisfaction	.749	.078	9.547	***
JS3	<---	Job _ satisfaction	1.286	.106	12.113	***
JS4	<---	Job _ satisfaction	1.172	.103	11.375	***
TA1	<---	Talent _ Attraction	1.000			
TA2	<---	Talent _ Attraction	1.110	.091	12.174	***
TA3	<---	Talent _ Attraction	1.010	.088	11.519	***
WE2	<---	Work __ Engt	.848	.075	11.376	***
WE4	<---	Work __ Engt	.999	.085	11.764	***
WE5	<---	Work __ Engt	1.000			
WE10	<---	Work __ Engt	.964	.079	12.273	***
WE9	<---	Work __ Engt	1.001	.080	12.582	***
WE6	<---	Work __ Engt	.892	.073	12.179	***
WE8	<---	Work __ Engt	.993	.084	11.850	***
WE3	<---	Work __ Engt	.902	.087	10.310	***

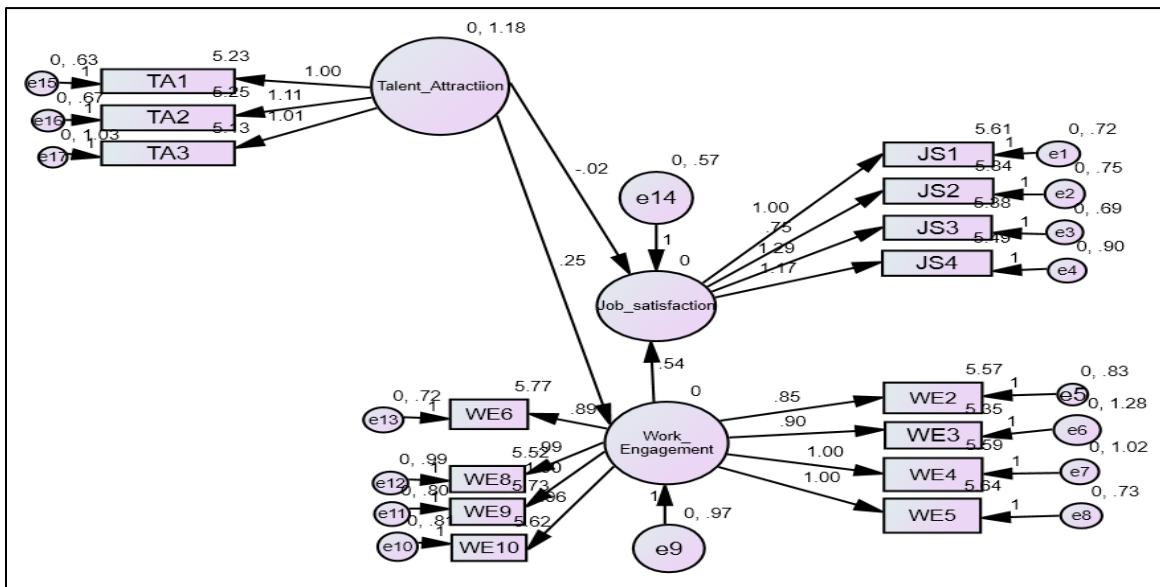


Figure 2: SEM for Talent Attraction, Work Engagement and Job satisfaction

DISCUSSION

Talent Attraction and Job Satisfaction

The findings from descriptive analysis in the context of the study indicated a connection between talent attraction and satisfaction. Participants reported agreement with statements reflecting positive recruitment experiences, such as perceiving the organisation as the best employer (Mean = 5.23), undergoing a selective recruitment process (Mean = 5.25), and feeling recognised as talent (Mean = 5.13). These perceptions are likely to enhance satisfaction by affirming the value and fit of the employee within the organisation. Although not statistically significant, the impact of talent attraction on job satisfaction in the petroleum industry was positive ($\beta=.149$, t -value = 1.849, $P>0.05$). According to the direct effect, job satisfaction increased by .149 units for every unit rise in talent attraction. Therefore, in the competitive and strategically important petroleum sector in Kenya, attracting top talent is critical. However, petroleum firms find that talent attraction alone does not lead to sustained job satisfaction. While attracting skilled professionals is essential, its direct effect on job satisfaction is often weak. The discrepancy between expectations and reality, the predominance of internal work conditions, and the critical mediating function of job engagement are some of the causes of this disconnect.

The results are consistent with empirical research, including that of Almomani et al. (2022), who examined the impact of talent management on the job satisfaction of Jordanian commercial bank employees and found that talent management programs improve job satisfaction. Nevertheless, in contrast to several research, the impact of talent recruitment as a component on employee work satisfaction was not statistically significant. Additionally, Saleh and Atan (2021) found a high

positive correlation between job satisfaction and sustainable talent management activities when assessing the impact of these initiatives on employees' job happiness. According to a study by Güll et al. (2023) to determine the relationship between nurses' organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and talent management, job satisfaction was positively impacted by talent management

Mediating effect of work engagement on the talent attraction-job satisfaction nexus

In the petroleum industry, attracting talent had a negative and non-significant direct impact on job satisfaction ($\beta=-.016$, t -value = $-.288$, $P>0.05$). On the other hand, there was a positive and statistically significant impact of talent attraction on job engagement ($\beta=.246$, $t = 3.681$, p -value < 0.05). Finally, it was discovered that work engagement had a positive and substantial effect on job satisfaction ($\beta=.541$, t -value = 7.589 , $p<0.05$). Additionally, the direct effect of talent attraction on job satisfaction was ($\beta= -.016$), and the indirect effect on job satisfaction through work engagement was ($\beta= 0.133$).

As a result, the total effect of talent attraction on job satisfaction was ($\beta=.117$), meaning that for every unit increase in talent attraction, job satisfaction improved by 0.117 units. Role clarity and reasonable job expectations are more likely to be experienced by candidates who are drawn to a company with a top employer brand and who go through a transparent, merit-based hiring process. This lessens the likelihood of a psychological contract violation, which frequently results in discontent. Furthermore, employees who believe they belong to a strategic talent pool are more likely to feel valued, acknowledged, and like they belong right from the start of their career—all of which are important factors that influence job satisfaction.

From a theoretical perspective of SET, when workers perceive that an organisation has invested significant resources in attracting and selecting them by presenting itself as a desirable employer and by conducting a fair, selective recruitment process, they develop a sense of obligation and trust. This perceived organisational support fosters positive emotional responses, like satisfaction at work and dedication to the organisation (Yamao, 2024).

The results of the study are consistent with those of Pradhan et al. (2019), who found that the relationship between HR practices and work satisfaction was positively mediated by employee engagement. They contend that HR initiatives increase workers' engagement with their jobs, which in turn boosts their level of personal fulfilment. Similarly, Goestjahjanti et al. (2020) found that the relationship between work satisfaction and talent management is positively mediated by employee engagement. Both Pradhan et al. (2019) and Goestjahjanti et al. (2020) point out that there are few studies that examine these three factors.

Further, Azmy (2023) on talent management as a mediating variable between employee engagement and job satisfaction in the public transportation industry in Indonesia, which had a positive influence in the industry. The application of talent management guided the employees to

achieve the best through the best placement and provision of a conducive work environment. Further, a study of the direct and indirect association between talent management, staff performance, engagement and satisfaction established that employee engagement positively mediated the relation between talent management and job satisfaction in NGOs in Pakistan (Hakro et al., 2022).

Additionally, the relationship between talent management and work happiness in Pakistani non-governmental organisations was also found to be positively mediated by employee engagement, according to a study that examined the direct and indirect relationships between talent management, staff performance, engagement, and satisfaction (Hakro et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, talent attraction had a minor effect on job happiness in Kenyan petroleum companies. Talent attraction primarily shapes an employee's expectations before they join the organisation. In Kenya's petroleum industry, these initial perceptions can be particularly strong. However, job satisfaction is not based on expectations but on lived experience. Once employed, individuals begin to evaluate their job based on daily realities: management support, workload, safety standards, and actual career growth. These lived experiences may fall short of the expectations created during the recruitment phase. Thus, dissatisfaction may follow even if the recruitment process was highly effective. Furthermore, the challenging work conditions can overshadow initial enthusiasm. Long shifts, remote locations, and limited social interaction can diminish the enthusiasm generated during the hiring process.

Moreover, work engagement is a critical mediator in the relation concerning talent attraction and work satisfaction. Talent attraction may bring in high-potential individuals, but if the organisational environment does not nurture engagement through meaningful tasks, supportive leadership, and recognition, then job satisfaction is unlikely to follow. In essence, talent attraction can only lead to satisfaction when it is converted into engagement through an enabling workplace culture.

Finally, talent attraction significantly influences work engagement by shaping initial employee perceptions of organisational support, fairness, and inclusion. Organisations that strategically invest in attracting, selecting, and recognising talent are better positioned to cultivate a highly engaged workforce. This relationship underscores the prominence of aligning recruitment initiatives with talent management and engagement strategies to achieve sustained organisational performance. Thus, work engagement is a key mediator between talent attraction and job satisfaction in Kenya's petroleum firms. Attracting high-quality professionals alone does not guarantee satisfaction; it is the level of engagement that determines whether these employees remain satisfied and productive over time.

Recommendation

Petroleum firms should ensure that their employer branding, job advertisements, and recruitment processes communicate the organisation's core values, mission, and long-term goals. When new hires resonate with these values, they are more predisposed to feel emotionally committed and engaged from the onset. Therefore, they should incorporate value-based assessments and cultural fit evaluations into the recruitment process. Based on the finding that work engagement majorly affects job satisfaction in oil firms in Kenya, management should prioritise creating an environment that fosters continuous engagement to maintain high satisfaction. Therefore, the management of petroleum firms in Kenya must create a meaningful and purpose-driven work environment. When personnel see how their efforts contribute to a larger goal, they become more engaged and, eventually, more satisfied. Attracting talent alone is evident from the findings that work engagement plays a substantial mediating role in the association between job satisfaction and talent attraction in Kenyan petroleum enterprises. Management must actively convert that attraction into sustained engagement to achieve long-term job satisfaction. Therefore, the management of a petroleum firm must ensure that recruitment processes do more than fill positions. They should intentionally target individuals likely to become engaged based on personality traits, motivations, and values. The management needs to reinforce engagement early through structured on-boarding.

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