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The efficacy of Merit-based Recruitment in Amolatar district in Northern Uganda

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to assess the success of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government Administration, Uganda.

Methodology: A case-study research design was adopted backed by quantitative and qualitative analysis that involved a careful and in-depth investigation of a particular unit or events under study for the purposes of generalization. It was conducted in Amolatar District. We chose this area because merit-based recruitment had failed as a result of weak decision-making processes by the district service communion and the influence-peddling by political leaders in the district. We took a sample of 60 respondents and interviewed 52 respondents living within the District Headquarters and in Amolatar Town Council.

Findings: The results revealed that the success of merit-based recruitment in Local Government Administration is very essential in terms of stakeholder responsibility, enhancing citizen confidence in the local government institution, and enabling the district service commission to recruit the best human resources for the provision of quality service.

Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: This study is central as it strengthens the merit-based recruitment model over and above other models of recruitment as well as enabling local governments to prioritize meritocracy over political patronage in every staff recruitment cycle.

Keywords: *Recruitment, merit-based, meritocracy, local government, system*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Internationally, the aim of a well-functioning recruitment and selection system is to screen and identify candidates with the skills, qualifications and professional competence to effectively perform senior civil servant tasks (Sigma, 2018; Meyer-Sahling et al., 2015). This report looks at good practice and challenges in the adoption and implementation of merit-based recruitment in the public sector; and its effect on corruption and nepotism. It focuses on experiences from the civil service in the Western Balkans, while also drawing from other contexts. While there is a growing body of literature on merit-based recruitment and on their association with lower corruption and nepotism, there is very limited discussion on the use of third-party monitoring. There is also limited discussion on gender issues in relation to meritocratic practices in the public sector.

In recent years, countries in the Western Balkans have taken various measures, such as reforming and adopting legislation, to increase the scope of merit-based recruitment procedures (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2019). There is still significant public perception, however, that political connections and nepotism often play important roles in getting jobs in the public sector in the region (Stojanović-Gajić, 2018). The implementation of current recruitment systems is subject to gaps and pockets of non-compliance, particularly in the case of recruitment into senior positions. Merit-based recruitment processes comprise of the three phases; application, assessment and selection and final appointment. (Sigma, 2018a; Schuster, 2017; Meyer-Sahling et al., 2015).

The civil service system in Zimbabwe, a developing country in Africa, is embedded with bureaucratic structures that are closed and rely on hierarchical authority; as a result, these structures are rigid, complex, and inflexible. Due to the inflexibility, the civil service system lacks dynamism and efficacy in the recruitment process. For the Zimbabwean context, Zungura (2014) stated that bureaucrats are motivated by self-interest and they maximize for themselves at the merit-based recruitment process, but it does not function properly. The existing structures that are considered to have merit are manipulated for the benefit of the elite. Bureaucratic structures in the civil service system and the management of the Public Service Commission (the government recruitment agency) in Zimbabwe are characterized by a chain of command and red tape. To this effect, the civil service recruitment process involves an extensive amount of paperwork and unnecessary delays which are detrimental to the levels of efficiency.

The most fundamental dilemma confronting the modern civil service system in Zimbabwe was determining how to neutralize the civil service system. The civil service system and the civil servants should be responsive to political direction (Smalskys and Urbanovic, 2017). In this regard, there is no clear separation between politics and the civil service system in Zimbabwe, and this has a detrimental effect on the merit-based recruitment process. The excessive use of political appointments and patronage have greatly affected the civil servant recruitment process in Zimbabwe. The merit principles are often compromised, resulting in a non-merit-based recruitment process.

In East Africa, using the recent census data from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, it explores the correlates of public employment and how they changed over time, using age of respondents as a proxy for likely year of entry into the public service. It argues that contrary to the patronage literature presumptions, educational qualifications mattered considerably for access to public sector jobs and these formal entry criteria therefore limited the ability of politicians to allocate them discretionarily. The probability of holding public sector employment has fallen rapidly since the 1980s with a smaller share of secondary and tertiary educated East Africans in their 20s and 30s working for the state than their colleagues who entered the system 20 years earlier. Rather than increasing the competition and politicking for public sector jobs however, it seems that the employment preferences of skilled labour may also have changed over the past decades. Today, on average, people from poorer and historically underserved regions of their respective countries are likelier to work for the government than those from more developed regions, suggesting that East Africa's most networked and advantaged youth are opting for private sector careers. Moreover, contrary to common perception, there is little evidence of ethnic preference in the distribution of jobs; the public services of Kenya and Uganda are relatively representative of the ethnic composition of their populations (Rebecca, 2015).

Nationally, the obstacles to merit-based recruitment and selection in Uganda's local government system is the earnest desire of the central government and other stakeholders in local governments to ensure that recruitment and selection in local government are not at variance with merit principles. It should be appreciated that the starting point for ensuring merit-based recruitment and selection is to comprehend the myriad of possible forces which oppose it. In problem solving, it is often said that a problem is solved by understanding a range of forces that sustain it and accordingly weakening them. In discussing the obstacle to merit, McCourt (2007) took cognizance of the fact that appointments are not made in an organizational vacuum, and are affected by the general climate and practices which surround them.

1.1 Problem Statement

Merit-based recruitment remain a challenge in Amolatar District Local Government. Many youths have failed to get jobs in the district service commission due to limited chances of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government. Merit-based has been substituted by nepotism and corruption-based recruitment processes which left poor youth with no option to join the service. However, recruitment processes is not well, many people who have ever applied for positions in the district failed due to corrupt practices within the members of the District Service Commission, top political leaders in the district and biasness technical personnel in the service who always wish to recruit their own children and relatives to fill in the vacant positions. These categories are well-known for extorting money from other applicants with intent to offer positions but deny them jobs.

Several measures have been put in place to promote merit-based recruitment by advertising position, screening eligible candidates, use of laws and byelaws to promoted merit recruitment but failed due to corrupt practices by the district service commission and influential politicians. The reasons for the research are enlighten the general public of Amolatar District on the good practice of merit-based recruitment and the best way to curbed down rampant corruption affecting recruitment processes and the researchers feels that this research will help to develop lasting solutions to the problem. Although the knowledge gaps exist, many job seekers were ignorant of the laws of recruitment policies and as a result the researchers felt that through conducting research many youths and community members will be empowered to fight corruption and improve on merit base recruitment processes in Amolatar District Local Government. It is because of all I have stated, that made the researchers to conduct the study on the impact of merit-based recruitment versus corruption in Amolatar District Local Government.

As a consequence, the purpose of the study was to assess the success of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government Administration. Specifically, four questions were answered: (a) What are the components of merit-based recruitment? (b) What is the process of merit-based recruitment? (c) Who are the stakeholders responsible for merit-based recruitment? (d) What are the likely achievements of merit-based recruitment?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The components of merit-based recruitment

a) Selection committees - The quality of merit-based recruitment and selection depends in large part on competent selection committees, which are often used to ensure political impartiality and objectivity in the recruitment process (Sigma, 2018a; Meyer-Sahling et al., 2015). Improving the professionalism of selection committees is important for improving trust in the selection procedure (Sigma, 2018). Selection committees can reduce the role of personal connections in recruitment and selection processes, enhance the level of public service motivation and improve compliance with rules. Statistical analysis conducted in Estonia indicates that commissions have a positive effect on management outcomes (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2018). Thus, the composition of committees should exclude political positions and members. Members should also be appointed for longer periods of time, rather than on an ad hoc basis (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2015). A higher level of professionalism could be achieved by legally requiring the establishment of a permanent (or at a minimum, a semi-permanent) selection committee; increasing the powers of a central coordination body; and training members of selection committees with a variety of techniques, including case studies and essays (Sigma, 2018).

The formation of selection commissions is required and routinely complied with across the Western Balkans for almost all categories of staff in the civil service. Commissions consist of three, four or five members and involve representatives from central management institutions and independent experts from outside the civil service to varying degrees (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2019

and 2015). Suggesting that a regional study of the Western Balkans concluded that selection commissions represent one of the weakest links of the recruitment process, often argued to lack political impartiality and professional independence (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2015). Members of selection committees were often found to lack adequate expertise and professional selection skills to carry out their role (Sigma, 2018a; Meyer-Sahling et al., 2015).

b) Institutions and capacity - Countries that have achieved better results in their efforts to professionalize their civil service are often also the ones that have been most successful in strengthening their organizations in charge of ruling the civil service system (Olavarría-Gambi, 2019). This has been the case in Latin America particularly in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru. Reforms have included the establishment of models for development career and human relations management and the creation of norms, rules and procedures for the recruitment, selection, training, performance evaluation, promotion, and compensations of public employees (Iacoviello and Strazza 2014). Indicating that across the Western Balkans, it is evident that civil service reforms are increasingly shifting their focus from the revision and upgrading of institutional frameworks to developing measures to improve the capacity of key participants of the recruitment procedures to implement them. Countries have varying levels of capacity. Efforts should include sharing experience among countries in the region. The capacity of recruiting institutions to implement recruitment processes is also influenced by the coordination between personnel departments and central civil service management units. In the absence of guidance and cooperative relations, it is difficult for personnel departments to effectively implement the procedure. A survey of the Western Balkans finds that recruiting institutions rate the quality of coordination highly and that Ministries of Public Administration are characterized by cooperative behavior and mutual support (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2015).

2.2 The process of merit-based recruitment

a) Advertisement - This is the first processes in the merit-based recruitment and always the most common form of external sources of recruitment. Organizations advertise vacant position on both electronic print and media to access a larger pool of applicants. As cited by Nel et al. (2009), an advertisement has communication as its basic underlying principle and it should be worded in a manner that triggers responses from job seekers. Recruiters should formulate the wording of advertisements in a manner that is not discriminatory.

b) Application - Merit-based application processes require: a competitive entry process; clear, non-discriminatory and relevant eligibility criteria; transparency; and simple, efficient application procedures. Recent research finds that public vacancy announcements are generally effective in increasing the transparency of recruitment processes and broadening the pool of potential applicants (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2018). Public advertising of senior civil servants, through various

mediums, such as user-friendly websites and newspapers, signals openness and opportunities for equal access (Sigma, 2018).

Progress in merit-based recruitment in the Western Balkans has been achieved with the implementation of initiatives to enhance the efficiency and user-friendliness of the application process. E-recruitment mechanisms, in particular, and social media tools, have professionalized the application process and have the potential to continue to strengthen merit recruitment (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2019). Across the Western Balkans, almost 90 per cent of vacancies are publicly advertised, in some cases, through digital technologies (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2019, 25). In Kosovo, 79 percent of civil servants learned about their first job in the civil service due to a public job advertisement (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2018).

Lessons from the region also suggest that limiting the number of documents required for submission in the preliminary stages of the application process can lessen its burden and encourage a wider pool of applicants (Sigma, 2018). The user-friendliness of the recruitment procedure has been enhanced in Serbia and Montenegro by requiring only successful candidates to submit a full list of required documents, rather than every applicant (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2019).

c) Assessment - Merit-based selection mechanisms include competency frameworks with well-defined assessment criteria that can be used to evaluate candidates in relation to job demands. They should define the standards and competencies (communication skills, team work; leadership; planning; coordination etc.) and break them down into levels of accomplishment (Sigma, 2018; Meyer-Sahling et al., 2015; UNDP, 2015). It is more difficult for a patron to insert a client into a job where knowledge and skill requirements are specified rather than where they are left vague. In the Western Balkans, there is frequently an absence of comprehensive competency frameworks that define expectations for senior civil servants and provide a relevant basis for testing candidates. They are either non-existent or not applied. The framework is the most advanced in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the state has begun to introduce it. Serbia has designed an elaborate competency model for senior civil servants, but it has yet to be formally enforced. Other countries in the region are in the nascent phases of developing competency frameworks. Competency frameworks should be available to selection committees. Without such guidelines, selection committees lack the benchmarks against which to assess candidates. In such situation, committees tend to focus more on examining candidates' knowledge and experience, which is inadequate for selection to senior positions (Sigma, 2018).

d) Interview - Interviewing is probably the most widely used single method of selection. A substantial amount of subjectivity, and therefore/ unreliability, is to be expected from interviewing when used as a tool of evaluation. One human being is evaluating another in somewhat strained and artificial circumstances. The specific sources of unreliability are several in numbers. First, the interview is allocated information objectives that cannot be obtained otherwise; this it deals with intangible goals such as assessing leadership role fit, and inner motivation. Secondly, much

research of specific sources of subjectivity has demonstrated the following: (1) those interviewed immediately after the candidates are appraised more favorably; (2) excessive weight is given to unfavorable information, with only one negative item leading to rejection in about 90 percent of the cases in one study; (3) interviewer stereotyping exists with more females recommended for such jobs as editorial assistant and more males for personal technician; (4) interviewers sometimes make a decision very early and conduct the rest of the interview searching for substantiating information; (5) when favorable information is received to unfavorable, the applicant fares better; (6) the greater the number of job vacancies the more favorable the applicant evaluation and, (7) interviewers are often affected by appearance and non-verbal clues having little to do with job performance (Global Journals Inc, 2016).

e) Appointment - According to Sigma (2018), unlike the application and assessment phases, some of the literature identifies the appointment stage as the one phase in which the role of politicians can be considered and limited political discretion allowed, particularly in the context of new democracies. This may be through the final selection of a candidate from a pre-filtered list, in order to ensure political acceptance of senior civil servants. In some cases, however, final selection rules allow for too high a level of discretion. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example (at the level of the state and the Federation), any of the candidates proposed by a selection committee may be appointed. If political discretion is too wide, however, this can undermine confidence in selection procedures. The right to appeal recruitment decisions is ensured in Western Balkan countries. Procedures vary across the region, however. In some countries, unsuccessful candidates can appeal to the courts, whereas in others it is possible to appeal to either an independent body or to a body created by the government before going to the courts (Sigma, 2018).

2.3 The stakeholders responsible for merit-based recruitment

a) Contract Officers - According to PSC (2017) urged that the Commission also administers the Recruitment and Selection of second level contract employees such as Assistant Chief Executive Officers and School Principals. Similar to CEOs, these positions operate under a contractual mode of employment to closely monitor work performance that is guided by agreed key targets. Term officers are employed within a specific timeframe such as Project Coordinators or Managers for development projects. The establishment of these positions are vetted by the Commission while the recruitment, selection and management of their employment is the responsibility of the relevant Chief Executive Officer. Appointments to these temporary positions also follow a process of Merit-based selection.

b) District Service Commission - The appointment and management of permanent employees is the responsibility of head agencies while the Office of the Dis Service Commission monitors operations by line agencies and provides advice on implementation to ascertain Merit-based selection. Administrative oversights in the process of Recruitment & Selection are addressed under the Grievance process by the relevant Chief Executive Officer or alternatively the Office of the

Public Service Commission. A permanent employee can also appeal to review a decision by the Chief Executive Officer on an appointment if it was merit-based. Appeals by permanent employees are lodged to the Office of the Public Service Commission who attempts to mediate prior to being referred to the Board of Appeal, if they are not resolved from mediation. The Board of Appeal reviews a decision on an appointment if it was merit-based and may decide to allow, disallow an appeal to proceed or decide that an appointment or promotion cannot continue (PSC, 2017).

2.4 The Achievements of Merit-Based Recruitment

a) Skills and Abilities - The merit factor of skills and abilities usually tests a person's aptitude to perform in a job. Some of the most common skills and abilities applied to senior positions with management and leadership expectation are strategic and analytical skills, time management with an inclusive leadership approach when it comes to decision making. Skills and abilities are part and parcel of education and are enhanced through work experience and continuous trainings. Because of the relativeness of a skill and the ability of a candidate (which must be demonstrated) to apply it to a job, they have been integrated and assessed as one merit factor. Required skills and abilities vary for positions and depend on the nature and complexity of the job. For records administration jobs as an example, basic skills in records maintenance such as filing, sorting and distribution is a requirement for particularly assistant to officer level positions. For higher level positions, skills and abilities become more focused on supervising, organizing and planning for efficient and effective management of records (Public Service Commission of Samoa 2017).

Skills acquired from trainings may be physically verified from completion certificates of the trainings. However, the panel of assessors may at times tend to evaluate the skills and abilities factor at face value because of the impressive presentation skills of the candidate in the interview, and disregards the work experience component which should further verify how it was applied and perfected in practice from a previous job. It is important then to consider other merit factors especially work experience as a contributing factor to the skills and abilities of a candidate. Skills-set and how well a candidate is able to apply them to the job is difficult to accurately assess and it is important that they be weighed and assessed together with other merit factors such as qualification and work experience. For consistency when assessing this merit factor, it is important also to apply other assessment tools for applicants to demonstrate and apply skills and abilities to a given scenario. For the Recruitment & Selection of contract employees administered by the Office of the Public Service Commission, analytical skills with abilities to think strategically or outside of the box are verified through a process of examination. The applicants are given a scenario that relate to the position vacancy they have applied, to address an issue, identify possible challenges and provide solutions for improvement (Public Service Commission of Samoa 2017).

b) Employees' Performance - Employees' performance is a key factor determining employees' integrity, honesty, reliability toward doing his/her job and responsibilities. Performance shows how workers have done job, how successful they have been, how much people trust on 38 them.

After recruitment and selection, qualifications of employees toward doing their jobs are evaluated by performance evaluation. Therefore, employees who have passed all recruitment and selection phases successfully are tended to be prosperous, honest, and independent (Adu-Darkoh, 2014). However, when recruitment and selection process is manipulated in favor of someone, the employees may not be able to have independence in doing tasks and good performance is not expected from employees who are selected with corruption and manipulation of selection process.

c) Introduction of e-recruitment management system - The various reforms such as E-recruitment, Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS), Computer-based exam, Facilitating Center-provinces Communication through Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and the creation of One Stop Shop are also undertaken by the Commission (IARCSC) as instructed by the president of Afghanistan Mohammad Ashraf Ghani (IARCSC Annual Report, 2018). In addition, to achieve gender equality in the government, the recruitment process has been made flexible for the women. To women applicants a positive discrimination score of 5 was conferred in the second stage (the oral exam) of the recruitment process in the past. But this score is going to be awarded in the first stage (written exam) from now onwards. The new policy also reduced the requirement of working experience as one of the criteria for women which will encourage and make women applicants eligible for civil service positions. The Appointment Board of the commission (IARCSC) initiated mass recruitment exam that includes procurement positions in government ministries and agencies, electronic tazkera (national identify card) authority, commercial attaché positions in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, teachers and low-ranking civil servant positions in government ministries and agencies, among others. So far in the three mass recruitment exams over one million applications have been processed and assessed.

d) Personal Attributes - For any organization, a culture of professionalism, work value and ethics are important ingredients to deliver on its services. The merit factor of personal attributes is very important and is usually assessed on the inherent character of an applicant based on the level of commitment, initiative, intelligence, reliability, honesty, integrity and values to deliver the job to support the overall objectives of an organization. Sometimes, dependent on the nature of the job that could be labor intensive, personal attributes are assessed physically through fitness, physique, and among others. Personal Attributes are relative to other merit factors such as experience and past work performance, skills and abilities. In most cases for instance, personal attributes such as commitment and initiative can be measured on an applicant's character or attitude shown in a work project, he/she had been involved in from a previous job and the success or not of that project. Management and leadership positions at the ACEO level places importance on the character of an applicant and how much and well certain personal attributes can be applied to motivate and strategically drive work objectives, or lead and manage a team.

Personal Attributes are always difficult to assess at face value or from the written application of a person who has expressed interest in a position. Assessment tools such as the interview or face to face discussion with applicants is an important part of merit-based selection to confirm written

claims relating to attributes such as commitment and initiative applied in previous work performed. Integrity or character reference checks are important to confirm and verify personal attributes with past employers (Public Service Commission of Samoa 2017).

e) Experience and past work performance - Experience & past work performance is assessed on both the quality and quantity of the claimed experience relating to the job. Quantity or length in years is used to benchmark the required number of years of work experience but emphasis is usually on the quality of that experience and how an applicant demonstrates it to facilitate the job. It is a general expectation of a panel member that the more years served, the more experience that the applicant may have gained and should demonstrate. In a panel's assessment, this may happen vis a vis especially when an applicant with the least years of experience exhibits impressive strategic, analytical abilities, compared to an applicant with the most years of working experience.

Experience and past work performance should be thoroughly considered to avoid errors in the assessment and must be verified not just from the interview but through further background checks. Both years of the work experience and the quality of the experience should be considered. In a decision also on an appointment for an ACEO position where the recommendation by the panel of assessors was overturned. However; to assess experience and past work performance selection panels need to consistently review experience not just on seniority or length in years an applicant worked. The quality of that experience must be verified through the use of assessment tools, the relevance of an applicant's experience and how much and how well in terms of knowledge and understanding, character and behavior is to be measured to ensure right match for jobs (Public Service Commission of Samoa 2017). Integrity checks are encouraged to validate the claims of applicants based on the factors of merit either through a test of personal attributes, experience and past work performance and agencies must carry out full background check of character, work performance with previous employers, evidence of performance appraisals as well as the verification of qualifications and police record.

2.5 Research Gaps

From the above, it was discovered while the issues highlighted in the reviews remain relevant to the study variables, they fell short of two key aspects, namely; one, that none of the studies was conducted in Amolatar district and two, a good number of them did not focus on the environments in local government administration, which this study focused on.

3.0 MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study Design: The research study employed a case-study research design as quantitative and qualitative analysis that involved a careful and in-depth investigation of a particular unit or events under study for the purposes of generalization. This design was chosen in order to provide information on the particular study and also had in-depth study in the area under investigation. The design was appropriately quantitative studies in nature and it sought to investigate deeply into the

phenomenon. This design was used to establish the success of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government Administration.

Study Location: The research was conducted in Amolatar District. The district is bordered by Kaberamaido District from East, North Apac District, Nakasongola from West and Busoga. The researchers chose this area because merit-based recruitment in the district has failed due to weak decision making by the district service communion and the influential political leaders in the district.

Population: The district has got a total population of about 170,100 people with 93,231 female and 76,869 males. The researchers will sample 60 respondents to represent the whole population. The researchers strictly interviewed 52 respondents living within the District Headquarters and in Amolatar Town Council.

Table 1: The Category of Respondents

Population in category	Population
District Service Commission officers	03
Chief Administrative Officer	01
Secretary to the District Service Commission	01
Head of Departments	10
Political Leaders	10
Local leaders	10
Community members	25
Total	60

Source; primary data

Sample and sampling techniques: The researchers managed sample 60 respondents and strictly dealt with 46 respondents only; 30 males and 30 females were interviewed. Convenience sampling is a method adopted by researchers where they collect market research data from a conveniently available respondent.

Table 2: Sample size population of respondents

Category of respondents	Population size	Sample size	Method of sampling
District Service Commission Committee	03	02	Purposive sampling
The Chief Administrative Officer	01	01	Purposive sampling
Secretary to district service commission	01	01	Purposive sampling
Head of departments	10	08	Convenience sampling
Political leaders	10	08	Convenience sampling
Local leaders	10	08	Convenience sampling
Community members	25	24	Convenience sampling
Total	60	52	

Source: primary data

Data Collection: Interview guides was used to obtain information from key informants and community members especially the; District Service Commission officials, secretary to the District Service Commission, Administrative Officer, Head of Departments, Political Leaders, Local Leaders and the community members living at Amolatar Town Council in Amolatar District. Also, Self-administered questionnaires were used by the researchers to guide in the data collection from the respondents.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Age distribution of respondents between 20-30 years representing 27% and 31-40 years with 23% were the majority who participated in the research processes though they were the victims of circumstances of unfair recruitment processes in Amolatar District Service Commission. The findings revealed that 41-50 representing 27% and 51-60 years with 15% were the respondents who were adult occupying the government positions in the district, political positions, owned good businesses, and well establish farmers. These categories were found to be using their position to influence recruitment processes in the district service commission. Further the researchers identified respondent's age 61-70 years representing 4% while 71-80 years above also had 4%. These categories were the elderly persons struggling to enter their grandchildren in to the government jobs but have failed due to lack of funds to secure positions for their relatives.

The findings revealed that respondents representing 12% never attended any class and these categories were the rural communities who are engage in crops production and fishing along Lake Kyoga and Kwania. The researchers further identified respondents with who attended 15% primary level and 19% drop out in secondary. These categories were engaged in fishing, farming and petty businesses in Amolatar Town Council. Further, the researchers identified 14% of respondents who attain Uganda certificate of education, Uganda Advance Certificate of Education, vocation skills training (craft, and at junior level, primary school teachers and nursing certificates. These categories were found to be very active in productive work especially farming, fishing and petty business and most of them lack jobs. Finally, the findings revealed that respondents with 17% had diploma and 23% degree and above. These categories were found to be parish chiefs, local leaders, district technocrats, and some business people providing administration at village, parish Sub-County level and district levels. These categories were the categories responsible for successful merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government.

The findings revealed that 17% of respondents were single and these were the youth trying to gamble with life after school though some of them never attended school. The findings revealed that, 38% of respondents were married couple and most of had matured children who were seeking for jobs at Amolatar District Service Commission. Further, the findings revealed that 25% of respondents separated with their spouse and they are leading their own lives. The researchers identified 8% of respondents who were widowed and these categories lost their spouse due to accidents, HIV/AIDs and old age illness. Finally, the researchers identified respondents with 12% who divorced their spouses due to domestic violence and poverty. All these categories were responsible for successful merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government since some of them are working as head of departments in the district. The researchers identified 25% of respondents who were running business in Amolatar Town Council. These categories were responsible for supplying goods and services to the community in the district. The findings revealed that 31% of respondents were civil servant working in Amolatar District Local Government. These categories were responsible for successful merit-based recruitment for unemployed youth living within the district.

The researchers identified 33% Of respondent who were peasant farmers and some of them were fisher mongers and fishermen around the lake source of Kyoga and Kwania. These categories of respondents some had attain certificate, diploma and degree but due to lack of jobs some of them resorted to farming and fishing as a source of income because to secure government jobs in Local Government requires money to buy positions where it has become a tough condition for youth coming from poor households. Finally, the findings revealed that 11% of respondents were self-employed. These categories were saloon owners, boda-boda motorcyclist providing cheap means of transport to people living in the district.

4.2 The components of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District

According to the focus group discussion, the researchers identified respondents with 30.8% who agree while 30.8% strongly agree with the views of the majority and urged that selection committee were responsible for successful merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government. They urged that selective committee plays great roles in screening candidates with right qualification, grades, skills and experience to fill in the vacant post. The findings revealed that 9.6% of respondents were not sure and could not make decision on whether selection committee are responsible for merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government because they have never applied for any position in the district. Further the findings revealed that 19.2% of respondent disagree while 9.6% also strongly disagree with the views of the majority and they urged that there are always biased in selection processes by the selection committee. They urged that selection committee are always corrupt in the selection processes by choosing the names of those who pay bribe, names of closed family members, friends and in-laws to participate in the interviews living the unknown applicants to flop without option to join the government service. This as a result has affected the success of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government.

Whether institutional capacity have strength for hiring qualified persons for the right job, the findings revealed that institutions components depend of the capacity to higher workers to fill in government positions. Further, we managed to identify 28.8% of respondents who agree while 32.7% strongly agree that institutional capacity can help in recruiting more workers to fill in the vacant positions. During the study, we identified 7.7% of respondents who were not sure and could not make decision on institutional capacity as a component responsible for successful merit-based recruitment processes. Further, the researchers identified 15.4% of respondents who disagree while 15.4% strongly disagree with the majority and urged that, institutional capacity as component of recruitment processes has failed to promote successful merit-based recruitment due to inadequate resources like money and technical personnel to conduct the recruitment of the institutional workers especially Local government and district service commission

4.3 The process of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District

on whether advertisement is the process for attacking qualified candidates for the right job in District Service Commission. The findings revealed that 30.8% of respondents agree while 25% strongly agree and confirmed that advertisement was the right way to attract well qualified candidates to apply for the position. They urged that the roles of District Service Commission are to post advertisement either on line, pin on public noticeboard and through announcement on television or radio stations in order to attract many applications for the position. During the interview, the researchers identified respondents with 5.8% who were not sure on whether advertisement is the process for attacking qualified candidates for the right job in Amolatar District Service Commission. These categories could not make decision due low level of education since most of them never attended and class. Further the researchers identified respondents representing 17.3% who disagree while 21.2% strongly disagree with the views of the majority on job posting

or advertisement as a process for attacking qualified candidates for the right job in Amolatar District Service Commission. They urged that the district service commission always publish the advertisement on their noticeboard and with decentralization policies the adverts is only put on New Vision or daily monitor to formalize the law governing recruitment otherwise they could fill in vacant positions with their relatives and friend which is against the law governing successful merit-based recruitment.

On whether application is the process of successful merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local government. The findings revealed that, 28.8% agree while 32.7% strongly agree and these were the majority respondents who confirmed that filling in an application design by public service was the right processes for one to be considered an interview with the district service commission. They confirmed that Amolatar District Service Commission has tried to avail public service forms in their office and at computer centers for easy access by the applicants to fill and submit it so that one can be considered for and interviews in case they meet the required qualifications. The findings revealed that 7.7% of respondents were not sure and could not mate decision on whether application was the right processes one can use to be considered for an interview in the district service commission of Amolatar. These categories were the majority who never attended class, drop out of school while in primary, and secondary and they don't have any academic qualifications. During the interview, 19.2% of respondents disagree while 11.5% strongly disagree and they urged that application forms could be right but many youths in Amolatar do not have access to due to lack of information about the forms and office of the District Service Commission. This has affected the success of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government

Regarding the assessment test is the process of successful merit-based recruitment. During the interview session with youth groups, the researchers identified respondents with 26.9% who agree while 30.8% strongly agree and confirmed that assessment test was one of the processes used for identifying the best candidates to fill in the vacant position in Amolatar District Local Government. These categories believe that all applicants shortlisted must go through and pass either the oral interviews, assessment or aptitude test to be considered eligible for the position. The findings revealed that, 7.7% of respondents were not sure on whether assessment test is the process of successful merit-based recruitment. These categories have never done any interviews and do not have any qualification due to low level of education. According to the interviews conducted by the researchers, 15.4% of respondents disagree while 19.2% also strongly disagree with the views of the majority respondent on whether assessment test was the process of successful merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government. They urged that, many applicants with closed relatives holding offices in the district do cheat assessment questions to relatives (applicants) before normal interview time and this as a result has affected the success of merit-based recruitment by the District Service Commission. they urged that some applicants do interviews for formalities just to cover up members of district service commission and the district technocrats from their corrupt practices.

Concerning whether interview is the process of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government. The findings revealed that, 36.5% of respondents agree while 26.9% strongly agree and they confirmed that interviews were the right processes for the Amolatar District Service Commission to higher the right candidate for the right position. They urged that, during the interviews the District Service Committee provide oral question to shortlisted candidates as they mark to find out the best who got the highest marks to be announce the best candidates. During the focus group discussion with the youth groups the researchers identified respondents with 3.8% who were not sure and could not make decision on interviews due to lack of knowledge on merit-based recruitment. The findings revealed that, 15.4% of respondents disagree while 17.3% strongly disagree with the views of the majority and they urged that interviews are one of the processes of successful merit-based recruitment but it has more harm to the applicants who live in rural communities and have no access to internet, radios and television. They urged that interview only favor few with God's fathers working in the government systems thus affecting merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government.

Regarding the appointment of qualified candidates is the right process of merit-based recruitment in District Service Commission. The research findings revealed that 26.9% of respondents agree while 30.8% strongly agree and these were the largest number of respondents who confirmed that appointment to the right qualified personnel was the process of successful merit-based recruitment. These categories urged that appointment was the final stage in the recruitment processes where qualified candidates who pass all the recruitment processes are awarded appointment letter to work in Amolatar District Local Government. During the interview, the researchers identified 7.7% who were not sure and could not make decision due to no knowledge on the processes of merit-based recruitment in government offices. According to the findings, the researchers identified 21.2% of respondents who disagree while 13.5% strongly disagree and they urged that there are too much buyers in awarding appointment letters to candidates. They urged that many successful candidates on several occasions have been left out due to nepotism, corruption, and bribe by well to do off family, influential politicians, district technocrats and business people leaving the youth who came from poor family suffer on streets with no option.

Concerning whether contract officials are responsible for success merit-based recruitment in district service commission. According the findings, the researchers identified 28.8% of respondents who agree while 30.8% strongly agree and confirmed that contract committee were responsible for successful merit-based recruitment. They urged that it was contract committee who identify vacant positions or gaps to be fill in government institutions or private organization then advertise it for suitably qualified candidates to apply for then be recruited to provide services. The findings revealed that 5.8% of respondents were not sure because they have never applied for any government jobs in Amolatar District Local Government. Further, the findings revealed that 15.4% of respondents disagree while 19.2% strongly disagree with the majority respondents and urged

that contract committee do not provide government jobs in Local Government but in private institution. They urged that contract work do not exist in Local government system of Uganda.

on whether District Service Commission is responsible for recruitment of workers in Amolatar District Local Governments. The research findings revealed that 32.7% of respondents agree while 25% strongly agree and confirmed that District Service Commission are responsible for recruiting workers for local government. They confirmed that in Amolatar District Local Government merit-based recruitment was only done by the district service commission who conduct all the merit-based recruitment processes. The findings revealed that 11.5% of respondents were not sure and could not make decision on whether District Service Commission exist in the district. They were the respondents who never went to school and others drop out of school when they were in primary and secondary. During the interview sessions, the researchers identified respondents with 17.3% who disagree while 13.5% strongly disagree. These categories disagree with the majority's views and they urged that it was influential politicians and the ruling government (National Resistance Movement) responsible for the recruitment of people in government offices and this as a result has affected merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government.

On whether skills and abilities are the achievement of merit-based recruitment. The findings revealed that, 26.9% of respondents who agree while 32.7% strongly agree and confirmed that skills and abilities are the achievement of merit-based recruitment by the District Service Recruitment of Amolatar District Local Government. These categories were the majority respondents who confirmed that the District Service Commission has achieved in recruiting well qualified civil servants with vast knowledge and skills on the field they are deployed to perform. The research findings revealed that, 7.7% of respondents were not sure on whether skills and abilities are the achievement of merit-based recruitment because they have never been employed in any government position. The researchers further identified 19.2% of respondents who disagree while 13.5% strongly disagree with the views of the majority and they urged that skills and abilities of workers employed by the Amolatar District Service Commission were compromised by bribery, nepotism, tribalism and relatives. They urged that many workers who pay bribes to recruitment team always affect performance and the achievement of merit-based recruitment because they will work with no supervision hence affecting the performance of workers in the district.

Concerning employee's performance is an achievement for successful merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government. The research findings revealed that 36.5% of respondents agree and they were the majority respondents while 25% also strongly agree the views and they confirmed that employee's performance is motivated good remuneration, allowances, promotion, and delegation of powers. These categories confirmed that newly recruited workers by district service commission may have good attitudes towards compare to old staffs with a lot of responsibilities. The research findings revealed that, 3.8% of respondents were not sure and could not make decision on whether employees' performance can be motivated by merit-based recruitment because they have never tried to apply for any position in government jobs. During

the focus group discussion with the district technocrats and some youths, the researchers identified 15.4% of respondents who disagree while 19.2% strongly disagree with the views of the majority respondents. They urged that employee performance was determined by better pay which is not the case in Amolatar District Local Government and in Uganda as a whole. They believe that many government workers in Uganda are being affected by economic crisis and inflation which as a result has affected the employee performance and successful merit-based recruitment in the district.

whether introduction of electronic management system is an achievement of successful merit-based recruitment in local government. The findings revealed that, 25% of respondents agree while 23.1% strongly agree and they confirmed that the introduction of electronic technology in recruitment process in Amolatar District Local Government was the strategy to improve merit-based recruitment by the District Service Commission. They urged that all recruitment processes from advertising, application, assessment interviews and appointment should be computerized in order to curb down corrupt practices affecting merit-based recruitment in the district. During the interview sessions, the researchers identified 13.5% who were not sure on whether introduction of electronic management system is an achievement of successful merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government. Further, the researchers identified 17.3% of respondents who disagree while 21.2% strongly disagree with the majority respondents and they urged that not all people have computer knowledge and skills on internet use. This category urged that electronic system of recruitment can still be maneuvered by the computer literates to corrupt and recruit their own people in to the office. In Amolatar District as a whole, access to computer and internet remains a big question to many youths and the general population which may greatly affect the introduction of electronic merit-based recruitment.

On the issue of personal attributes were the achievement of merit-based recruitment in district service commission. According to the interview sessions held with the youth groups and some community members they researcher managed to identify 28.8% who agree while 32.7% strongly agree and confirmed that personal attributes by employees was a bye product of good personal attributes which is an achievement in merit baes recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government. The findings further revealed that 9.6% of respondents were not sure and could not make decision on personal attributes as an achievement for merit-based recruitment. These were the peasant farmers who never had hope of joining government work. The research findings revealed that 15.4% of respondents disagree while 13.5% strongly disagree with the majority respondents. These categories urged that people many workers employed in Amolatar District Local Government had low attitude towards work due to underpayment, lack of skills, and low level of education and under funding of government programs. They believe that poor attitudes and personal attributes affect the success of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government.

Concerning experience and past work records was an achievement of merit-based recruitment in local government. The findings revealed that, 26.9% of respondents agree while 30.8% strongly agree and confirmed that work experience in the field were an achievement to be considered by the Amolatar District Service Commission. Good experience help employee perform to the best of their knowledge with minimal supervision. The research findings revealed that respondents representing 5.8% were not sure and could not make decision on whether experience and past work records were an achievement of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government. These categories were the respondents who have low education qualification. During the interview session with respondents, the researchers identified 23.1% who disagree while 13.5% strongly disagree and they urged that experience was the trick Amolatar District Service Commission and the Local Government were using to block fresh graduates from getting jobs and yet the knowledge gained from universities were enough for one to be employed in government service or any other private institutions. These categories urged that the behaviors of the district technocrats and members of the district service commission greatly affected the success of merit-based recruitment in the district.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The success of merit-based recruitment is vested on the institutional components based on planning, organizing and directing of human resource department to carry out recruitment of qualified personnel to fill in vacant positions. The processes of successful merit-based recruitment were focused on open advertisement, submission of application by applicants, currying out an assessment by district technocrats, conducting interviews and awarding of the appointment letters to qualified personnel. These processes require transparency by the district service committee because when messed up the work output may be very poor and affect service delivery in the district. The need for the well trained and qualified stakeholders (personnel) as members of the District Service Commission would help promote successful merit-based recruitment. The advanced knowledge will help to eliminate negative attitude and biased mind when selecting the right candidates to fill in the vacant positions. The achievements of merit-based recruitment in Amolatar District Local Government Administration will be achieved basing on the attitudes, personality, transparency, introduction of electronic system of recruitment, and quality education attainment by the recruitment team, applicants and the district technocrats. Many youths are on streets due to negative attitudes and poverty in households. Therefore, there is need for clear strategies of recruitment of workers in the district service commission.

5.2 Recommendations

The study encourages the following:

- a) There is need for government of Uganda to put much effort to install electronic recruitment systems in all the public institutions.
- b) There is need for Amolatar District Service Commission Committee members to remain independent in the recruitment processes of civil servants.
- c) There is need for the district service committee of Amolatar District Local Government to accord all applicants an equal opportunity.
- d) There is need for the selection and recruitment committee to follow the right procedure to find a complete qualification needed for the vacant position.
- e) There is need for the employees to give off their best, the human resource department should appraise them regularly.
- f) There is need for the District Service Commission to promote transparency in the recruitment processes of workers in government position.

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