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Human Resource Practices and Talent Retention in Private Universities in Kenya

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Abstract:

This study will examine the effects of human resource practices on talent retention in Private Universities in Kenya. The specific objectives for this study will be:

- Training,
- Compensation,
- Work environment, and
- Organizational culture

The target population for this study will be 41 private universities from which private universities with LIA will be selected in Nairobi. A sampling frame eliminates a sampling error and provides an equal opportunity for all individuals in the population. The study will have a sample frame of 13 private universities with LIA which will be the unit of analysis. All the variables will be anchored on theories, and inferential descriptive statistics will be used in this study. The instruments will be tested for reliability and validity before the actual collection of data. Data will be collected with the help of questionnaires which will be both structured and semi-structured. Data will be analyzed with the help of a statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 23 and presented in the form of pie charts, graphs, and tables.

Keywords: Human resources practices, talent retention

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The success of most competitive companies throughout the world, including institutions of higher learning, lies in their highly skilled employees, which these institutions spend millions to retain. Literature reveals that the cost of losing the best employees is enormous and beyond monetary quantification. Additionally, the loss of one talented employee to a competitor institution strengthens the competitor's advantage.

A supplementary exhaustive and current description of the notion of retention is described as 'to stop the harm of the proficient workers from exiting the efficiency and productivity' (Chiboiwa et al., 2010). Retaining talented workers benefits an institution because the staff's skills and knowledge are significant to an institution's capability to be sparingly economical (Kyndt, et al., 2009). Though, there are several challenges in struggling to retain competent staff. Human Resource managers can easily find that enticing and holding that the talent is problematic (Barney, 1991; Samuel & Chipunza, 2009). Brilliant and good workers are the talent of an institution. Retaining brilliant/capable workers is extremely significant and aimed at lasting development in addition to the achievement of professionals (Heathfield, 1995). However, retention of the staff has to turn into the key trick suffering modern educational institutions.

One of the problems that are shared by most Asia-Pacific countries is the loss of their home-grown talent. Many qualified and experienced professionals, instead of working for domestic firms, immigrate to other countries, move to foreign-owned multinational enterprises or accept offshore appointments (Cooke, 2011). A lack of integration between authorities, businesses, and educational institutions regarding the upbringing of new generations of employees makes the situation even worse (Chatterjee et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, it has become obvious both for local employers and governments that without proper human capital, companies cannot build a competitive advantage to compete successfully in their domestic markets and overseas. In particular, in 2008, the Chinese government launched the Thousand Talents Plan initiative, which aimed to attract both local and foreign talent to compensate for the lack of a qualified labor force in the country. The programme was aimed at recruiting full professors from institutions worldwide or senior managers for key Chinese organizations. By 2014, the planned number of recruits was exceeded by four times (Recruitment Program of Global Experts 2017).

Selesho and Naile (2014), in their study on academic staff retention at Vaal University of Technology in South Africa, observed that the ability of the university to pay its staff market-related salaries and pay progression greatly influenced the retention rate. The same study by Selesho and Naile also concluded that the majority of the respondents felt that academic growth is the drive that can keep them in the University's employment and that the opportunity for academic growth and promotion potential also promotes their intentions to stay with the university.

The education sector is a very vital sector in the economy and should therefore be highly prioritized to ensure that it is as efficient as possible. Various studies on employee retention have been carried out in Kenya. For example, Munyoki (2010) researched human resource practices and employee retention in commercial banks in Kenya, while Kiptugen (2003) studied human resource practices in public institutions in Kenya. Mutune (2017) carried out a study on employee retention in small family businesses in Kenya, while Polisa (2017) conducted a study on the influence of e-recruitment practices on employee retention in multinational corporations in Kenya. While these studies have shed light on human resource practices and employee retention, studies focusing on the challenge of retaining employees in private universities remain scarce. Such a study is important given the importance of these institutions in contributing to the employment and economic development of the nation.

Jacobs and Roodt (2011) state that the retention of employees has become an issue that needs to be addressed by adopting suitable retention strategies that will reduce an employee's intention to leave. The intention to leave is a measure of employee retention (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2014). Intention to leave is defined as 'an employee's decision to leave the current job and look for a better opportunity elsewhere (Rizwan, 2014). The decision to leave may be a result of work-related factors such as a lack of work environment, work-life balance, less money, routine work, poor supervision, and lack of advancement opportunities (Smit & Bussin, 2015). Employees are now looking to work in organizations that offer challenging tasks and responsibilities, offer growth opportunities, compensate fairly and enable them to maintain a work-life balance (Smit & Bussin, 2015). Failure of an organization to satisfy these needs may lead to an employee's intention to leave, which consequently leads to high costs related to staff turnover.

Effective retention strategies are based on acquiring knowledge of the factors that influence an employee's decision to stay (Armstrong, 2009). Educational institutions want to be competitive to attract a large number of employees and students. Proper retention strategies will enable these institutions to achieve a competitive edge by ensuring the provision of high-quality services (Naris & Ukpere, 2010). Public and private Universities in Kenya have commercialized the majority of their services and therefore depend on their employees for quality services and products (Naris & Ukpere, 2010). Human resource management personnel in private universities should therefore implement suitable human resource management practices to satisfy their staff and motivate them to stay for long periods.

Human resource management practices should therefore strive to increase the levels of employee retention in institutions by keeping their employees motivated and satisfied. A motivated workforce is key to the success and survival of any business in today's uncertain business climate with rising competition (Wangiri, 2015).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

To introduce new products, gain new technology, and cope with demographic changes today, most of the organizations ceaselessly struggle to gain essential inclination. Most of the organizations facing global competition are under constant pressure to step up the pace, and in the meantime, they must make an effort to employ trends toward a society that is based on information and services (Van der Wal, 2014). Due to this riotous and challenging business environment, one of the hurdles that confront business organizations is the retaining of core employees (Mou, 2013). Organizations and business inclinations nowadays depend on knowledge-based human capital, and this human capital plays an important role in an organization's effectiveness and productivity.

Previous studies have been done on the retention of academic staff in Kenyan Universities. For instance, Ng'ethe et al. (2012) carried out a study on determinants of academic staff retention in Public Universities in Kenya and the influence of leadership style on academic staff retention. Ng'ethe et al. (2012) found a close to 11% turnover in public university academic staff, which significantly affected the institutions' performance. The study concluded that there was a need for a study that would employ both qualitative and quantitative methods to clearly bring out the factors influencing the retention of academic staff in public and private universities in Kenya.

A study carried out by Iveta (2014) identified job design, recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and reward, performance management, internal communication, employee involvement, employment security, and prestige as human resource management practices that are associated with employee retention.

Abu & Zhang (2016) also state that some of the human resource practices that organizations should undertake include: training, performance appraisal, employee participation, job definition, and reward and compensation. Based on the analysis of such literature, the human resource management practices that will be used for the purposes of this study will be training and development, compensation, work environment, and organizational culture. From the above discussions, these practices have been seen to be the most relevant to this study.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objective

The study aims at establishing the relationship between human resource practices and talent retention in private Universities in Kenya.

1.3.2. Specific Objective

- To establish the effect of training on talent retention in private universities in Kenya
- To determine the effect of compensation on talent retention in Private universities in Kenya
- To investigate the effects of work environment on talent retention in private universities in Kenya
- To establish the effects of organizational culture on talent retention in private universities in Kenya

1.3.3. Research Hypothesis

- H₀₁: Training affects talent retention in private universities in Kenya
- H₀₂: Compensation on affects talent retention in Private universities in Kenya
- H₀₃: Work environment affects talent retention in private universities in Kenya
- H₀₄: Organizational culture on talent retention in private universities in Kenya

1.4. Significance of the Study

The results of this study will be valuable to individuals and organizations interested in understanding the effect of human resource practices on talent retention in the higher education sector. The private universities' management may use the findings and recommendations of this study to work towards retaining its talented workforce, thus helping the organization achieve its objectives.

The findings of this research will also be useful to academicians and scholars since they contribute to the existing literature in the field of human resource management, particularly in the education sector.

The findings will also provide information and facts that will serve as the source of literature for scholars, students, and researchers, as this study could be used as the basis for conducting future research.

Organizational managers and leaders will benefit from the study by understanding the human resources practices and talent retention concepts and thereby adopt good human resources management practices and behaviors, which will enable the organization to survive through any crisis, and competitive business environment as well achieving competitive advantage.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The goal of the research is to explore the effects of human resource practices on talent retention in private universities in Kenya. The objective populace for the investigation will be 41 private universities and a sample out of 13 private universities with LIA.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Conceptualization is a concept in terms of its meaning, constructs, and dimensions by a wide array of researchers and Commonalities and controversies among the key conceptualization.

2.2. Theoretical Review

2.2.1. Equity Theory

This study is based on the motivational theory known as equity theory, which was introduced in 1963 by John Stacey Adams, a psychologist specializing in work and behavior. He successfully developed this motivational theory of work. The equity theory concerns the balance between input and output. According to this theory, input is a contribution made in an assignment or job, whereas the output is a reward or return for what was received from the input. Input typically involves effort, loyalty, hard work, commitment, skill, ability, flexibility, tolerance, determination, support from colleagues, and personal sacrifices. Output generally covers all of the financial rewards, facilities, retirement arrangements, bonuses, and even praise. The balance between input and output plays a big role in ensuring talent retention in an organization.

Equity theory also acknowledges that subtle factors and variables can affect employees and employers. For example, if an employer wants to motivate his worker, he can use this theory by balancing the input with the output. If an employee is working diligently, then the salary is well spent. With the offer of a high salary as output, then the input of the worker can also be expected to increase and, thus, a high level of talent retention; when inputs increase based on the output offered, an individual will be motivated. Therefore, based on equity theory, if one is satisfied with what he has contributed and earns returns that are worthy of his contribution, then there is a balance between input and output. However, if circumstances are such that a person feels he is not receiving the output he deserves based on what he has contributed, he may perceive an injustice and may want to leave an organization.

2.2.2. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

While considering an effective strategy to retain an employee in an organization, management must rely on both intrinsic and extrinsic variables to influence employee retention. The dimensions of HR practices are directly or indirectly connected with satisfaction and dissatisfaction advocated by Herzberg (1959). Herzberg's theory states that there are certain factors that are related to the content of the job and provide satisfying experiences for employees. These satisfying experiences lead to satisfied employees and, thus, less labor turnover in an organization. These factors are called motivators. These include achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. All these

aspects play a big role in creating an organizational culture which, in the end, affects talent retention in an organization. The theory also states that there are non-job-related factors that can cause dissatisfying experiences for employees. These factors are known as hygiene factors, including company policies, salary, and co-worker World Journal. These hygiene factors also make up a company's way of life in that policies set by an organization do affect the way people behave and thus determine the talent retention rate in an organization.

2.3. Empirical Literature Review

In this section, you need to interrogate the literature and critique and bring out the gaps clearly.

2.3.1. Training and Talent Retention

Training is a key retention factor for employees of any age. Statistical evidence indicates that job training is a critical factor for personal (behavioral) and professional (technical) development (United States Department of Labor, 2009). The availability of access to training and development programs to all employees is critical in facilitating organizational growth, particularly with performance and technological improvements (Boomer Authority, 2009). According to Hong, Hao et al.(2012), 'Training is defined as the systematic acquisition and development of the knowledge, skills, and attitude required by employees to adequately perform an assigned job or task to boost performance in the job environment. Training should impart new knowledge and skills if the training is relevant and meet employee and organizational needs, efficiently and effectively designed and delivered.

In order to gain organizational goals and fulfill the proficiency gap in an effective and result-oriented manner, the required Training programs play a vital role, and successful training programs are upshot in increased employee satisfaction, organization's production, and reduced job turnover. Most organizations consider training as an investment in human capital. Training begins once new employees get familiar with their work, and the new and updated learning techniques (training) increase employees' job skills (Noe, 2010). Employees are offered training programs according to their required specific skills. Training is also given to employees to remove their discrepancies and improve their performance. While on the other hand, to avail future abilities, employees are offered or given developmental programs. Improving interpersonal communication, technological know-how, improving basic literacy, and problem-solving techniques can be improved or shaped through Skill development (Iqbal & Khan, 2011).

Chen (2014), in his study on the effect of training on employee retention, agrees that the most specific benefit of training and development is that it is best seen as an incentive to enhance employee retention, especially to keep those who have the ambition to seek career advancement in their work. He further argues that training can motivate employees and build organizational commitment and loyalty since it makes employees realize that the organization is helping them achieve their career goals.

A recent study by Mohamud (2014) indicated that those organizations that have low turnover spent 59% of training time in formal training. In contrast, those organizations that spent 18% are facing high turnover. For instance, there is poor job performance because of the scarcity of proper training, which results in higher job turnover. Organizations with a pragmatic perception of the fundamental nature of training will have high success ratios and less job turnover (Thompson, 2015). Contrary to these findings and investigations regarding the positive impact of (T & D) on turnover, some of the researchers are of the view that (T&D) affects organizational commitment and job satisfaction, which as a result, changes or affects staff retention (Garavan et al., 2012).

According to the study conducted by Attia et al. (2005), it is assumed that most of the organizations try to lessen job turnover through the stipulation of training programs to its constituent and find training programs as ways to broaden employees' skills and techniques. According to the findings of Rouleau et al. (2012), those individuals who are more contented and have access to training programs are more likely to leave the organization. One probable cause for this action could be that individuals attend training programs to increase their job mobility & employment opportunity. On the other hand, Morey (2014) recommended that there is an association between job turnover & the availability of training programs, but the exact scenery of this association is blurred.

2.3.2. Compensation and Talent Retention

Creating a compensation structure that supports an employee development program is a distinct challenge for companies. Many organizations claim to base pay raises on performance, but that is not actually the case. Some companies try to emphasize a team environment but continue to reward people for individual achievement (Feldman, 2000). These inconsistencies can cause frustration and cynicism among employees.

Compensation is not only in the form of money but also in non-cash form. Benefits, such as a pension, life and health insurance, retirement plans, and allowances that include company cars or subsidized transportation, represent a significant pay element in many large firms (Deo, 2014). In his book 'Human Resource Management,' Gary Dessler defines compensation as 'Employee compensation refers to all forms of pay going to employees and arising from their employment.' The phrase 'all forms of pay' in the definition does not include non-financial benefits but all the direct and indirect financial compensations (Gupta, 2014). Many studies have revealed that an employee's working position and the length of his employment usually determine employee wages in the organization. Most of the studies have enlightened with proof that one of the HR factors, i.e., compensation, plays an essential role in employee retention (Clegg et al., 2006). A study conducted by DiPietro and Condly (2007) explores that employee turnover intentions result in an improved work environment & non-financial compensation plays an important part. If there is no proper compensation planning, the organizations are in danger of creating or will result in an unsatisfied working environment. According to the investigation

carried out by (Collier & Esteban, 2007), employees' commitment to the organization relies on the organizations' compensation policies. Compensation 'is the most critical issue when it comes to attracting and keeping talent' (Das, 2002). Fair remuneration or compensation is the foundation stone and agreement between employers and employees. Money can influence behavior. That's the fundamental hypothesis that researchers nowadays anticipate (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

Selesho and Naile (2014) in their study on academic staff retention at Vaal University of Technology in South Africa, observed that the ability of the university to pay its staff market-related salaries and pay progression greatly influenced the retention rate. The same study by Selesho and Naile also concluded that the majority of the respondents felt that academic growth is the drive that can keep them in the University's employment and that the opportunity for academic growth and promotion potential also promotes their intentions to stay with the university.

2.3.3. Work Environment and Talent Retention

According to Msengeti and Obwogi (2015), workplace environment is the total cluster of observable physical, psychological, and behavioral elements in the workplace. This includes not only the physical elements around the place of work but also all things that form part of the e-Work environment, if not conducive, may lead to employee turnover. Other factors that may affect the work environment are unsociable working conditions and unfriendly working hours (Chalkiti, Kalotina & Sigala, 2010). In addition, it involves social interactions at the workplace with peers, subordinates, and managers, as well as factors such as work processes or procedures. Work environment plays a vital role since it influences the satisfaction of employees. This is because it is concerned with a comfortable physical work environment that is free from any form of harassment (Qasim et al., 2012), and factors such as working hours, temperature, ventilation, noise, hygiene, lighting, and resources are all part of working conditions. Lack of favorable working conditions, amongst other things, can affect the worker's mental and physical well-being, thus leading to low morale. When employees feel that the management is not able to provide them with ideal working conditions, they may use this as an excuse to underperform and fail to meet the targets set by the company (Qasim et al., 2012). Ng'ethe et al. (2012) argue that the work environment is one factor that affects employees' decisions to stay with the organization. This may include office space, equipment, air conditioning, and comfortable chairs, and employee's involvement with the work itself.

2.3.4. Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be described as the core value that defines corporate practices and behavioral patterns. It is a major factor that influences organizational decisions and actions. It represents the sum total of the assumptions, values, norms, symbols, technologies, and behaviors of the organizational members (Alvi et al., 2014). Similarly, Davoodalmousavi (2013) described organizational culture as a set of beliefs, norms, and values that guide the thinking and actions of employees in the organization.

In defining organizational culture, it is evident from the literature that most definitions combine assumptions, values, norms, beliefs, ways of thinking, and acting together to explain and discuss the concept of organizational culture. A study by Aldhuwaihi (2013), citing Quinn & Cameron (2011), reported that organizational culture has a strong relationship with the organizations' values, mission, aims, goals, and ways of building shared values. Similarly, organizational culture implies a system of intangible and indisputable beliefs that justify how organizational members conduct themselves. Also, Mateiu et al. (2013) pointed out that the organizational culture in any organization is formed through the process of interactions among specific elements, such as the organization's founder, selection criteria, top management, and socialization. According to the authors, these elements in the organization work together to create a unique organizational culture in that establishment or institution.

There are four types of organizational culture, as propounded by Quinn & Cameron (2013) that can be practiced by any organization. These are:

- Collaborate (Clan) Culture,
- Create (Adhocracy) Culture,
- Control (Hierarchy) Culture, and
- Compete (Market) Culture

2.3.4.1. Collaborate (Clan) Culture

This type of culture is like a family and believes in mentoring, encouragement, and working collectively. It is an open and pleasant workplace atmosphere where workers share a lot about themselves. It can be compared to the extended family. Leaders are considered to be mentors or even parent-like. Group allegiance and sense of practice are strong.

2.3.4.2. Create (Adhocracy) Culture

This type of culture is dynamic, focusing on risk-taking, innovation, entrepreneurship, and a creative place-to-work environment. A pledge to test and think differently is what joins the group.

2.3.4.3. Control (Hierarchy) Culture

An extremely planned and controlled ambience can be characterized by doing things right and formally. Policy and procedures guide behaviors. Leaders strive to be good coordinators. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is most important. Official policies are what hold the group jointly.

2.3.4.4. Compete (Market) Culture

A result-oriented and market-driven organization is based on result achievement. The group is competitive and result-driven. Leaders are challenging, hard-driving, and productive. The emphasis on winning unifies the organization (Quinn & Cameron, 2013). It is possible for an organization to have more than one organizational culture type because the different departments might be practicing different variants. Denison (2000) proposed an organizational culture theory. The theory is based on four cultural aspects in any organization, which are: Involvement,

- Consistency,
- Adaptability, and
- Mission

3. Conceptual Framework

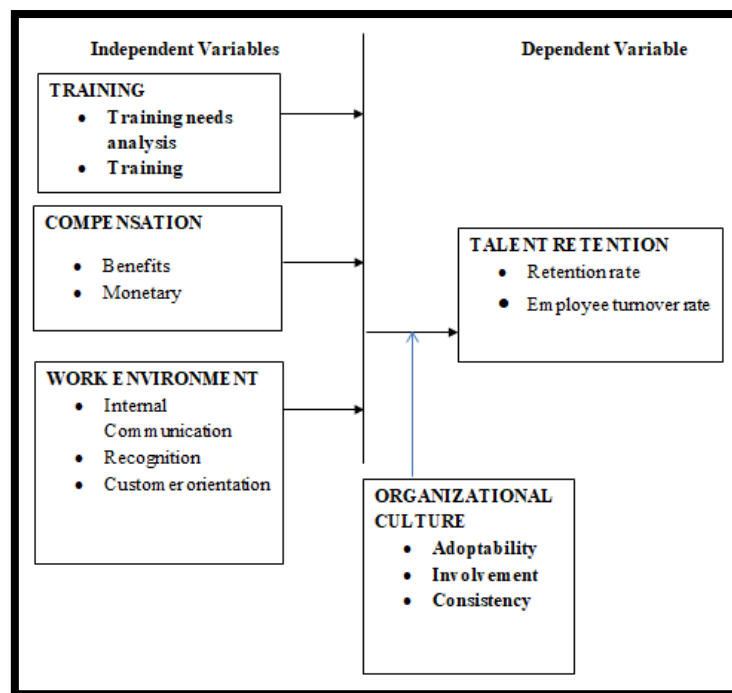


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Design

According to (Kothari, 2004), research design includes an exploratory plan and a comprehensive strategy, which indicates the techniques and strategies used to collect and analyze the required data. In this study, since the data to be collected include the management of questionnaires, the survey will embrace a descriptive research design which will use both qualitative and quantitative survey design to collect data. Primary data from human resource managers and secondary data will be collected from reports of CUE and websites.

4.2. Target Population

This involves a bunch of individuals, articles, or items from which tests are chosen for evaluation in research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2009). The research targets 150 workers who were the supporting staff, middle management, and top management working at Equity bank. The targeted population is as follows:

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Private Chartered Universities	23	56.09
Institutions with LIA	13	31.71
Constituent colleges	5	12.20
Total	41	100

Table 1: Target Population

Source: Commission for University Education (2021)

4.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

As indicated by Kothari (2009), sampling is a commonly selected number of people, articles, or a number of opportunities, and choosing to discover something about the selected complete population is a dialogue that will be

investigated. A sample of the most specified population was selected using various intentional structures. A sample size of 13 private universities will be selected.

4.4. Pilot Testing

A pilot study will be conducted before the actual study to check on the reliability of the questionnaires in collecting the data. The pilot study will involve 10 respondents picked randomly from the private universities with a Letter of Interim Authority to show how closely related a set of items are as a group in order to give a logical conclusion. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (1999), this is the best sample, which is above 30% and is good for the analysis.

4.5. Reliability and Validity of Research Instrument

Validity refers to whether the research measures what it intended to. Reliability can be identified as the extent to which the measurement of a test remains consistent over repeated tests of the same subject under identical conditions. A pilot study will be done to identify elements of the study population and unit of analysis. During the study, draft questions will be pre-tested to remove ambiguity and achieve a high degree of precision. On the other hand, questions that will not yield the required data will be discarded. All the units of analysis will be comprehensively studied, and the whole population will be taken into account.

4.6. Data Collection Procedure

Thereafter, the researcher will make appointments with the respondents to get permission to conduct the study. After permission is granted, administration of the questionnaires will begin, and it will take 2 days to complete the exercise. This will be made possible through the help of the two research assistants, who will be closely supervised by the researcher. The study used 'drop and pick' method to administer the questionnaires to the sample population.

4.7. Data Analysis Technique

Before analysis, data will be cleaned by checking for logical constancy, and any unnecessary data will be removed. Data analysis procedure includes packaging the collected information in order and structuring its main components so that the findings are easily and effectively communicated. The data will be analyzed by use of both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative technique involved using tools such as charts, graphs, tables, and other statistical presentation methods. The qualitative technique will incorporate the use of measurable variables which do not produce discrete numeric data and use various statistical techniques to prove successful interpretation of the findings.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

- This research will seek to find out the effects of HR practices on talent retention in private universities operating with LIA in Kenya.
- These study results will benefit researchers who will generate more knowledge on talent retention that will be shared with institutions of higher learning.
- The independent variables under study will include compensation, training, work environment, organizational culture, and talent retention.

5.2. Recommendations

- The findings of this study will seek to reveal the relationship between HR practices and talent retention in private universities in Kenya.
- Compensation, training, work environment, and organizational culture, being elements of Human resource practices, will play a significant role in determining its effects on talent retention in private universities.

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