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Employer branding and talent retention: perceptions of employees in higher education institutions in Uganda

Asuman Matongolo, Francis Kasekende and Sam Mafabi

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine, empirically the relationship between employer branding attributes of reward strategy, people orientedness and; leadership and development on talent retention in institutions of higher learning in Uganda.

Design/methodology/approach – In a cross-sectional study, data were obtained from 218 respondents from two public universities. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling were employed to analyze the data.

Findings – The paper has two major findings: first, CFA maintained three dimensions of employer branding, namely; reward strategy, people orientedness and; leadership and development; and second, only reward strategy and people orientedness emerged as significant predictors of talent retention.

Originality/value – The results suggest that institutions of higher learning that embrace reward people orientedness strategies as measures for employer branding succeed in retaining their employees for longer.

Keywords Universities, Uganda, Talent retention, Employer branding, People orientedness, Reward strategy

Paper type Research paper

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Introduction

Talent is one of the most valuable weapons in any firm's armory (Tlaiss *et al.*, 2017) and indeed, numerous observers deem it the asset most likely to help secure and sustain a competitive edge (HR Digest, 2017). This means that organizations cannot ignore the significance of attracting and retaining talented people in the current era where skills and knowledge of employees are amongst the main competitive enablers of performance (Minchington, 2010; Prinsloo, 2008). When well handled, talented human resources (HR) encourage organizational efforts to execute growth strategies hence rendering sustainability to organizations and promoting economic growth (Boshard and Louw, 2010; Ingham, 2006; Prinsloo, 2008). Perrin (2005) argues that retaining key talent should be the number one priority on the HR agenda for organizations seeking a competitive edge over others. Talent retention is important in realizing a full return on investment (Tlaiss *et al.*, 2017). According to Buckingham and Vosburgh (2001), talent retention is the foremost driver of all the factors that can influence the effectiveness of organizations in the future. The impact of persistent talent shortage could render organizations incapable of growth and detract from their ability in gaining or sustaining a competitive edge, thus ultimately endangering their survival (Boshard and Louw, 2010; Prinsloo, 2008). The collapse of organizations adversely affects the macroeconomic environment as it counters sustainable economic growth, which in turn negatively influences a better quality life for all. Organizations seeking to sustain a competitive advantage have moved quickly to develop systems to leverage the value of talent for this purpose (Robinson and Barron, 2007). This is evidenced in the works of Maheshwari *et al.* (2017) who found that the banking sector, is increasingly competing to attract highly skilled personnel in various professional areas; in an attempt to have a distinct edge in the marketplace.

Against this background, Minchington (2006) argues that organizations should now struggle to explore the various ways through which they can retain their highly talented employees.

Minchington is supported by Cheese *et al.* (2007) and Crous (2007) who state that several organizations are moving toward placing a high premium on employer branding as a critical success factor in their struggle to retain talented academic staff. The employer brand puts forth an image showing the organization as a good place to work (Sullivan, 2004). Many firms have developed formal employer branding or are interested in developing such a program ((CIPD), 2007; Martin, 2005) in an attempt to retain their talented employees.

The term “branding” as used in HR management refers to the set of intangible attributes and qualities which attract the potential employees to offer their services to a particular organization (CIPD, 2015). According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), employer branding suggests unique aspects of the organization’s employment offerings which distinguish it from other organizations. Employer branding portrays an image in which the employer reciprocates positively by extending his stay at work because he sees the firm as a good place to work. The practice in talent retention may be explained from the social exchange theory. In social exchange, negotiated exchanges between parties are originated on the anticipation that actions will result in a corresponding return, and that human relationships are formed by the use of a prejudiced cost-benefit analysis and the contrast of alternatives (Gouldner, 1960; Michener *et al.*, 2004; Murstein *et al.*, 1977). This is particularly pertinent for the talent retention context because essential to the theory is the concept of reciprocity. Reciprocity being fundamental to the theory from its inception and the associated rewards and obligations imply that when institutions provide staff development as a gimmick of employer branding, the assumption is that existing talented employees will be required to stay. This hence will attest to the social exchange theory of reciprocal interdependence, in which one party’s action is contingent on the other party’s behavior (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). The assumption is that when higher institutions of learning are able to brand themselves, then actions of academic staff will be reflected in form of prolonged stay at work (Davies, 2008). According to the CIPD (2007) report on employer branding, organizations have found that effective employer branding leads to competitive advantage, helps employees internalize company values and assists in employee retention. Given the cutthroat competition that characterizes today’s business environment, there is therefore greater need for the HR function in organizations such as institutions of higher learning to focus their attention and energy on retaining talented academic staff (Minchington, 2010; Kearney and Gebert, 2009).

Many institutions of higher learning such as universities have tended to provide full sponsorship to train their staff probably as a way of employer branding. This perception for academic staff in universities is believed to be the source of the institution’s competitive edge (Minchington, 2010; Prinsloo, 2008). However, a good number of such staff have always left for greener pastures. For example Makerere University Business School (MUBS) sponsors academic staff to undertake Masters and PhD programs with the view that they will be motivated and work for the institution after graduation. In January 2015, of the two PhDs of it graduated, one left after serving two years and another did not serve at all (MUBS Annual HR Report, 2017). In 2017, it graduated 11 PhDs. Of these, two have left even before serving the bonding period. At the master’s degree level MUBS graduated over 13 academic staff in 2017, of whom four have left and joined other institutions. Furthermore, evidence shows that public universities in Uganda have more often failed to engage in the activities that provide intangible attributes and qualities that help them to attract potential and retain existing staff. In 2011, Makerere University lost 25 high profile lecturers, while Mbarara University of Science and Technology lost 20 highly skilled lecturers and Gulu University continues to lose ten senior lecturers every academic year (Auditor General Report, 2016). These losses have far reaching impact on both the functioning of academics in the institution and its financial status. There has been little effort to establish whether training as an employer branding gimmick in these universities has an effect on the retention of high profile employees. To-date there is little or no empirically verifiable study that attests to this issue. There continues to be a dearth of literature on the employer branding-talent retention relationship among public universities in Uganda.

Consequently, the present study appears sensible in analyzing these concepts and these relationships in a non-western developing country context. This study’s focal point is on the public higher institutions of learning in Uganda. The authors intend to offer a more precise and

unswerving appreciation of the function of employer branding in talent retention. Additionally, the authors intend to contribute one explanation of how individually, the different measures of employer branding impact talent retention in universities in Uganda.

The authors have organized this paper in five sections. First is the brief overview of the research and contribution of the study. Second, is the literature review on previous studies on employer branding and talent retention and; hypothesis development. Third, is the methodology used in the study. Fourth is the testing of hypotheses and interpretation of the findings. Lastly, the authors present the discussion, research implications, conclusion, limitations and suggestions for future research.

Literature review and development of hypotheses

Employer branding and talent retention

In an era where skills and knowledge of employees are amongst the main competitive enablers, organizations cannot ignore the significance of attracting and retaining talented people (Minchington, 2010; Prinsloo, 2008). Rappaport *et al.* (2003), have defined talent retention as the effort by an employer to keep desirable workers in order to meet business objectives. For organizations to retain their talented employees they need to put effort on those enhancers of talent retention. One factor that has been identified to contribute to the satisfaction of staff is employer branding. Firms use employer branding to advertise the benefits they offer, including training, career opportunities, personal growth and development (Kristin and Surinder, 2004) which eventually creates a worker force that is satisfied with its jobs. According to CIPD (2015), an employer brand conveys the company's value proposition, that is, the totality of the company's culture, systems, attitudes and employee relationships and it encourages the employees to share goals to achieve success, profitability and job satisfaction. According to Kasekende *et al.*, (2018), organization cultures and systems imbed a number of things including rewards, people orientedness and strategies for functional HRs development both technical and managerial. Gilliver (2009) argues that employer brand identifies an organization in the marketplace and makes it unique. It gives everyone in the organization a grip on what the organization is, and everyone interested in joining the organization a clear picture of what to expect. It infuses the firm's recruitment process and the interaction among people in the organization. Brands are among a firm's most valuable assets which create an employer value proposition. An employer value proposition adds a stimulus to the employer brand. It provides a concise and clear refinement of what sets a company apart as an employer. The employer value proposition is unique and based within a human capital strategy or people strategy, which is aligned to business strategy (Kochanski, 2004), and is informed by five main elements, namely: work environment and affiliation (this includes values, culture, quality of colleagues, managers and leaders), work content including challenging work and work-life balance, benefits including development and career growth (indirect financial reward), and remuneration (direct financial reward) (Michaels *et al.*, 2001; Munsamy and Bosch, 2009; Sartain and Schumann, 2006).

A differentiated employer value proposition provides a succinct and clear distillation of what sets a company apart as an employer, and is defined as the unique set of attributes and benefits that will motivate target candidates to join a company and current employees to stay (Sartain and Schumann, 2006). As Dell and Ainspan (2001) explicitly put it, the employer brand establishes the identity of the firm as an employer. It encompasses the firm's values, systems, policies and behaviors toward the objectives of attracting, motivating and retaining the firm's current and potential employees. However, effective talent attraction and retention remains a hard task for HR managers (Boshard and Louw, 2010; Prinsloo, 2008) including the management of higher institutions of learning like universities. Important to note here are two issues arising out of this debate; one is that what firms offer as employer branding gimmicks differ from firm to firm, and two; is that they offer this as a totality but not in their individuality to promote talent retention. Furthermore, few studies have examined the relationship between employer branding and talent retention (Tutuncu and Kozak, 2007; Robinson and Barron, 2007; Carbery *et al.*, 2003) especially so in the higher education sector in a developing country

setting like Uganda. In this study we assume that all the firm offers as employer branding can be categorized into three, namely, reward strategy, people orientedness and leadership and development (Kasekende *et al.*, 2018)

Reward strategy and talent retention

Researchers such as Keller and Cacioppe (2001) have considered the employer brand to be the value proposition in which to retain talented employees for a long time. According to Allen and Meyer (1990), employer branding must be designed to raise the employer brand image. Chapman *et al.* (2005) also add that the employer branding which involves various HR practices such as competitive financial and non-financial rewards, offers of travel abroad, valuing of persons competencies; are important for determining the future organizational reputation to be considered as an employer of choice. This is directly related to talent management (talent retention and talent hunt). Gilliver (2009) argues that employer brand identifies an organization in the marketplace and makes it unique. It gives everyone in the organization a handle on what the organization is such as a firm's recruitment process, employee expectations such as remuneration and other nonmonetary incentives and the interaction among people in the organization and everyone interested in joining the organization gets a clear picture of what to expect. Sullivan (2004) define employer branding as a targeted, long-term strategy including rewards, compensation, recruitment and others to manage the awareness and perceptions of existing employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm.

Tlaiss *et al.* (2017) argue that attracting, choosing, developing and retaining talent has become a top priority among senior leaders which is talent management. However, Tlaiss *et al.* argue, that even though talent retention is the ultimate goal of talent management, it astonishingly remains below the radar of much research. This hence brings into question the role of such factors as financial and non-financial rewards (Tlaiss *et al.*, 2017) in enhancing talent retention. In their study of the Indian IT industry Naim and Lenka (2017) state that recruitment, talent development, knowledge management, social media, performance management and rewards are the main practices associated with talent retention. It is evident here that rewards are an important factor in the management of the retention of talented employees in the organization. The researchers hence hypothesize as follows:

H1. Reward strategy will be positively associated with talent retention in a university setting.

People orientedness and talent retention

Talent has been defined as an individual's differentiated potential or ability to execute against the organization's growth strategy and is a term that is much talked about in the contemporary era. However, effective talent attraction and retention remain a hard task for HR managers (Boshard and Louw, 2010; Prinsloo, 2008). John *et al.* (2010) assert that HR professionals can manage the talent by searching for and retaining them through being open in their work ethics, creating friendly environments and being honest to their employees. According to Hughes *et al.* (2010) and Green *et al.* (2013), talent retention involves arranging the best performing staff regardless of their national or international diversity in the organization such that they should bring out the brand image to make the organization competitive. Talent retention is useful if the employers are to strengthen their brand through encouraging workplace fun and work/life balance so as to increase their competitiveness (Kasekende *et al.*, 2018). Batra (2017) states that companies that offer flexible work environments by giving enough autonomy and flexibility to the employees so they do not feel constrained; tend to retain their employees more than those that do not. Such flexible work environments are an indicator of people orientedness on the side of management. According to McDonnell *et al.* (2017) talent retention practices refers to the management of high performers and high potentials and the identification of strategic positions and talent management systems in an effort to obtain maximum performance. Such talent retention McDonnell *et al.* argue, is based on several factors inclusive of concern for people issues.

In her study of UK-owned multinational companies, Sheehan (2012) found that management development variables, such as the strategic role of HR, management development systems, management development ethos, perceived importance of management development and provision of management development, had a consistent and robust influence on perceived

subsidiary performance. This is the reason why organizations are struggling to get the highly talented employees (Jiang and Iles, 2011) through putting in place practices that encourage work/life balance. According to Celani and Singh (2011) employer branding factors such workplace fun makes the organization more attractive for the job seekers, thus making the organization take less effort to develop its talent pool. In a turnover intentions model developed by Alexandrov *et al.* (2007) results indicated that perceived management concern for employees and customers has a significant impact on employees' turnover intention. But management concern for employees and customers indicates a level of concern for individuals in the organization. This hence implies that there exists an association between people orientedness and talent retention. Furthermore, Tlaiss *et al.* (2017) aver that talent retention practices are mostly motivated by the direct costs associated with a failure to retain talent, and less with the indirect costs and loss of tacit knowledge. However, Tlaiss *et al.* argue that substantial attention should be put on the discovery that despite the use of functional power via incentives to promote talent retention, the focal point is mostly on normative power via workplace culture and organizational norms. In other words, although Tlaiss *et al.* consider rewards as an input for talent retention, they mostly stress a conducive workplace culture which is people orientedness. We hence hypothesize that:

H2. People orientedness will be positively associated with talent retention in a university setting.

Leadership development and; talent retention

According to the works of D'Amato and Herzfeldt (2008) learning orientation, organizational commitment and talent retention had a significant relationship across managerial generations in Europe. D'Amato and Herzfeldt's study found that younger managers were more reluctant to remain in the same organization and had less organizational commitment. This argument extends the debate on the implication of leadership development on talent retention. According to Mueller (1982), human capital theory postulates that some labor is more productive than other labor simply because more resources have been invested into the training of that labor, in the same manner that a machine that has had more resources invested into it is fitting to be more productive. Mueller asserts that one of the basic tenets of human capital theory is that investment in skill-building is more profitable and more likely to be undertaken the longer the period over which returns from the investment can accrue. And in this case investment in skill building is assumed to be a means of provision of development opportunities for staff. According to Jonathan *et al.* (2011), talent management as the ability to attract, bring on board, manage, develop and redeploy or counsel out employees while optimizing their use – in an effort to achieve competitive success requires the concerted effort on management to train its employees on how to handle subordinates. Toracco (2000) stated that knowledge is now recognized as one of an organization's most valuable assets, required to retain and leverage the value (talented staff) of knowledge. Organizations seeking to sustain a competitive advantage have moved quickly to develop systems to leverage the value of knowledge for this purpose (Robbins, 2000). Thus, it is easy to see the dramatic effect of losing employees who have valuable knowledge. Attracting and retaining talented employees through employer branding has become a burning issue in today's working environment.

Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2010) also refers to employer branding as a set of attributes and qualities – often intangible that makes an organization distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture. Intangible attributes include such priority as staff development and trainings in form of seminars or workshops or sponsorship to farther one's studies. According to CIPD (2007), many firms have developed such formal employer branding or are interested in developing such programs. Firms appear to be expending considerable resources on employer branding campaigns in form of managerial trainings for their employees indicating that they are finding value in the practice. However, each firm tends to do this on its own without tested research on what employer brands to pursue. According to Baruch (2004), the recent trend toward downsizing, outsourcing and need for flexibility on the part of the employer has imposed a new form of psychological contract in which employers provide workers with marketable skills through training and development in exchange for effort and flexibility.

Foster *et al.* (2010) state that there is no agreement on definition of talent in extant literature, but that that talent is based on perception and context, such as knowledge, skills or ability that

an individual or organization perceives as a recognizable capability that has an intrinsic value. Organizations need to either create an intellectual capital environment where the transmission of knowledge takes place throughout the structure, or continue to lose important individual knowledge that has been developed through the length of service (Foster *et al.*, 2010). This deep knowledge is what many believe will help to meet the needs and expectations of the customers and create and sustain a competitive advantage within the global economy in which organizations are competing today. We hence hypothesize as follows:

H3. Leadership development will be positively related to talent retention in a university setting.

Research methodology

Sampling and data collection

Data for the study were collected based on a random survey from two selected public universities in Uganda. The selected public universities are Makerere University and Kyambogo University. These universities were selected because this is where high attrition levels of quality academic staff was evidenced (KYU HR Report, 2016; MUK HR Report, 2016). The survey questionnaires were distributed to 331 out of 607 staff in different positions in the two selected public universities. A total of 218 usable questionnaires were collected from the respondents. Among the respondents, approximately 69.3 percent were male. Most of the respondents were in the 30-39 years age group, which comprised approximately 48.2 percent of the total respondents. All the respondents have at least a bachelor's degree. Approximately 77.5 percent of the respondents have been working for at least five (Table I).

Determinants of variable

To measure talent retention, this research used a tool developed from the works of scholars Ghapanchi and Aurum (2011) and Perrin (2005). The tool had eight items including "I am unlikely to look for a new job in the next year" and "Teaching is a pleasant career for me, it was my first choice." For employer branding, the researchers applied Bergstrom *et al.* (2002) work and modified it to suit this study. The tool had 16 items such as "This University is a workplace that is

Table I Demographic profiles of the respondents

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	151	69.3
Female	67	30.7
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	72	33.0
Married	146	67.0
<i>Age</i>		
Below 29 years	64	29.4
Between 30 and 39	105	48.2
Between 40 and 49 years	33	15.1
Between 50 and 59 years	9	4.1
Above 60 years	7	3.2
<i>Education</i>		
Bachelors	27	12.4
Masters	175	80.3
PhD	16	7.3
<i>Experience</i>		
Below 5 years	49	22.5
Between 5 and 9 years	105	48.2
Between 10 and 14 years	40	18.3
Between 15 and 19 years	9	4.1
Above 20 years	15	6.9

open, friendly and sincere and emphasize honesty”; “My University offers competitive financial benefits (e.g. salary, bonuses)” and “This University invests heavily in research and design to attract.” A five-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used in the questionnaire.

Model and statistical test

At first, validity of the data was tested through several standard diagnostic procedures – the adequacy of data was tested using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test of sampling adequacy and Bartlett test of sphericity.

According to Field (2006); Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), the acceptable limit for KMO is 0.70 and above and Bartlett’s test is significant at $p \leq 0.05$. For all our variables, the Bartlett’s test was significant and the KMO statistic was high enough (well above 0.7) indicating acceptance for factorability (Tables II and III).

Testing for normality

The normality of data was tested using the skewness and kurtosis analysis. According to Kline (1998, 2011) a fair level of normal distribution of data is realized when the skewness and kurtosis statistics do not exceed values of 3 and 10, respectively. Teo (2009) supports Kline when he adopts this guide in his study of technology adoption. When values of skewness and kurtosis are far from zero, this indicates that the data are not normally distributed. Another indicator of acceptable levels of skewness and kurtosis is when the absolute value of the skewness is less than three times the standard error (Field, 2006). In this study (see Table IV), all skewness and kurtosis values are not far from zero and the absolute value of the skewness and kurtosis is less than three times the standard error, hence the values fall within acceptable limits implying that our data were normally distributed. Furthermore, according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), the data are considered normal if the value of skewness and kurtosis lie between -2 and +2. As shown in Table IV, the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables show a normal distribution as all the values are between -2 and +2.

Table II Rotated component matrix for employer branding

	Reward strategy	Component People orientedness	Leadership development
RS1: This university’s financial health and stability makes it an organization with strong future prospect	0.80		
RS3: My university offers competitive non-financial benefits (e.g. gym, insurance, medical care)	0.75		
RS4: This university is a workplace where my competencies are valued and rewarded	0.74		
RS10: My university offers travel opportunities abroad to its employees without any discrimination	0.73		
RS8: My university offers competitive financial benefits (e.g. salary, bonuses)	0.72		
RS7: This university encourages its employees to exhibit high level of integrity which is high on my list	0.69		
PO2: This is a fun place to work		0.83	
PO14: My university values international diversity		0.80	
PO8: My university ensures work/life balance for its employees		0.73	
PO11: I am offered challenging workload at this University		0.73	
PO12: This university is a workplace that is open, friendly and sincere and emphasize honesty		0.73	
LD5: This university is a workplace where my innovative and creative thinking are encouraged and valued			0.85
LD6: This university invests heavily in R &D to attract potential employees interested in research, creativity and innovation			0.83
LD8: Employees are offered training and development to further themselves professionally			0.82
Total	3.67	2.39	1.61
% of variance	30.60	19.91	13.38
Cumulative %	30.609	50.51	63.89
KMO	0.86		
χ^2	1,108.56		
Df	66		
Sig.	0.00		

Table III Rotated component matrix for talent retention

	Component	
	Intention to stay	Career advancement
TR4: I wish that tomorrow finds me here	0.85	
TR1: I feel motivated to remain teaching in this university for a long time	0.84	
TR2: I want to remain teaching in this university because while here, I will achieve the better future that I hoped for	0.83	
TR8: I am unlikely to look for a new job in the next year	0.81	
TR6: I am likely to stay in this university even if I get an opportunity to change my career	0.80	
TR3: Teaching is a pleasant career for me, it was my first choice		0.83
TR5: The profession I am in is ok		0.81
TR7: Here, lecturers work until retirement		0.79
Total	3.05	1.85
% of variance	38.06	23.16
Cumulative %	38.06	61.22
KMO	0.84	
χ^2	619.67	
Df	28	
Sig.	0.00	

Table IV Test of normality and reliability

	Skewness		Kurtosis		Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE			
Reward strategy (1)	-0.20	0.17	-0.02	0.34	3.64	0.87	0.89
People orientedness (2)	-0.66	0.17	0.85	0.34	4.07	0.98	0.90
Leadership development (3)	-0.85	0.17	0.99	0.34	3.97	0.78	0.77
Talent retention (4)	-0.78	0.17	-0.41	0.34	3.48	1.15	0.92

Reliability statistics

To establish the internal consistency and stability of the measuring instrument, the researchers carried out a reliability analysis using Cronbach's α coefficient as an indicator. The ideal value of Cronbach's α coefficient differs among various studies. According to Nunnally (1978) a reticent reliability varying between 0.5 and 0.6 would be sufficient for an initial study. Loewenthal (2004) states that 0.6 is an acceptable value for reliability. Furthermore, Hair *et al.* (2010) state that generally 0.6 is an agreed lower limit for Cronbach's α in an exploratory research; although Pallant (2007) cites 0.7 and above as an acceptable value. In this study, the results of Cronbach's α for all the variables are more than 0.7, implying that all the statements are reliable (Table IV).

Correlation analysis

The researchers carried out a correlation analysis to examine the relationship between the variables under study in a linear fashion (Coakes *et al.*, 2008). This analysis helped to identify whether one variable was related to another and the extent to which they were related. This was done prior to testing the model. For this study, a Pearson correlation test was used to ascertain whether there are any multicollinearity problems occurring. Since the values of coefficient of the independent variables were not bigger than 0.8 (Field, 2000) (see Table V), then the variables under study were not considered highly correlated to each other to explain the dependent variable, implying there was no multicollinearity problem. The results also show statistically significant and positive relationships among the variables, but the talent retention variable shows a low level of correlations with others.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM)

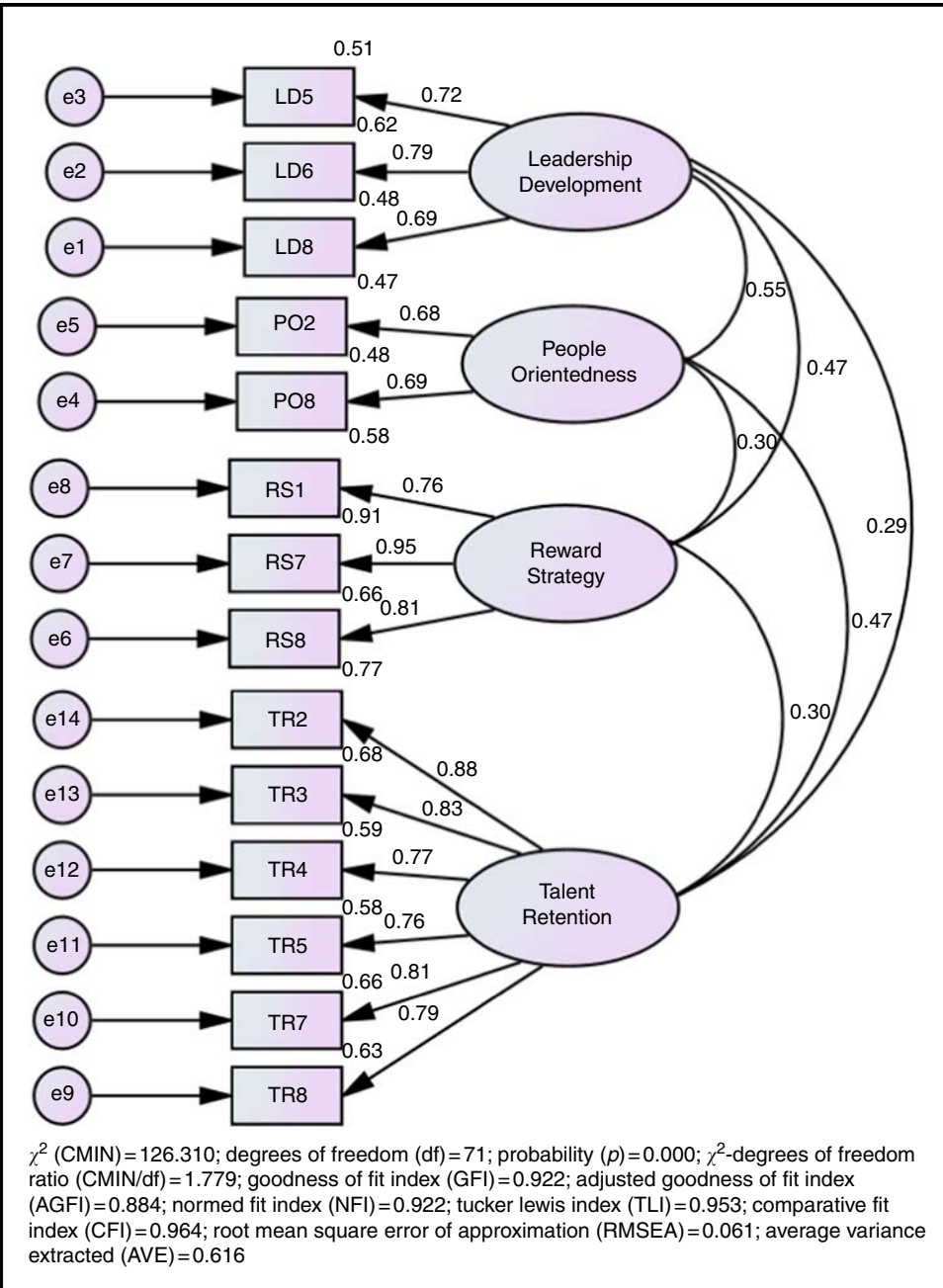
The data were then analyzed using CFA (see measurement models in Figure 1) using the retained loadings from exploratory factor analysis. The resulting fit indices (see Figure 1) indicate that the

Table V Descriptive statistics and multiple correlations

	1	2	3	4
Reward strategy (1)	1	0.53**	0.40**	0.29**
People orientedness (2)		1	0.50**	0.34**
Leadership development (3)			1	0.26**
Talent retention (4)				1

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Figure 1 Measurement model for employer branding and talent retention



model fitted our data acceptably. Furthermore, the model exemplified acceptable discriminant and convergent validity of the scales ($AVE > 0.5$ and $NFI > 0.9$, respectively) (Figure 1). After carrying out CFA, the researchers proceeded to construct a structural equation model to test for model fit and support for or negation of hypotheses developed. The resulting fit indices (see Figure 2) indicate that the model acceptably fit the data. The SEM model results enabled the researcher to establish whether the hypotheses developed were supported or rejected. The results are shown in Table VI.

Results and findings

Hypothesis testing

H1 sought to examine the relationship between reward strategy and talent retention; and findings revealed a positive and significant association between the two. Regression results ($\beta = 0.19$ $CR > 1.96$) in Table VI indicate that reward strategy explains 19 percent of the variance in talent retention. The findings confirm that the positive increments in reward strategy are positively associated to talent retention. This finding supports *H1* meaning that a change by 1 SD in reward strategy creates a change of 0.19 SDs in talent retention.

H2 required examining the relationship between people orientedness and talent retention. The results indicated a positive and significant association between the two. Regression analysis results ($\beta = 0.43$ $CR > 1.96$) in Table VI indicate that people orientedness explains 43 percent of the variance in talent retention. The findings confirm that the positive increments in people

Figure 2 Structural equation model for employer branding and talent retention

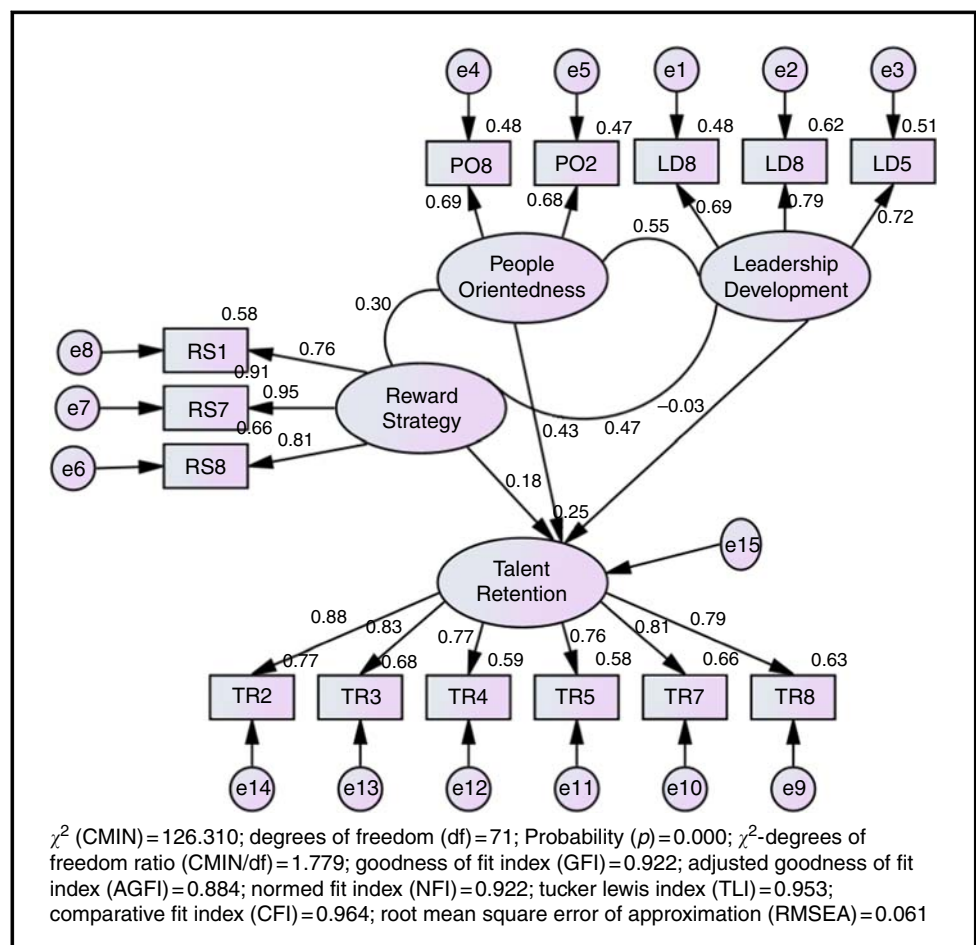


Table VI Regression weights for the structural equation model

	Unstandardized estimates	SE	CR	p	Label	Standardized estimates
Talent retention ← Leadership development	-0.06	0.21	-0.26	0.79	par_11	-0.03
Talent retention ← People orientedness	0.67	0.19	3.43	***	par_12	0.43
Talent retention ← Reward strategy	0.24	0.11	2.14	0.03	par_13	0.19
LD8 ← Leadership development	1.00					0.69
LD6 ← Leadership development	1.41	0.16	8.68	***	par_1	0.79
LD5 ← Leadership development	1.16	0.14	8.29	***	par_2	0.72
PO8 ← People orientedness	1.00					0.69
PO2 ← People orientedness	0.96	0.19	5.17	***	par_3	0.68
RS8 ← Reward strategy	1.00					0.81
RS7 ← Reward strategy	1.19	0.08	14.76	***	par_4	0.95
RS1 ← Reward strategy	0.91	0.07	12.23	***	par_5	0.76
TR8 ← Talent retention	1.00					0.793
TR7 ← Talent retention	1.10	0.08	13.25	***	par_6	0.82
TR5 ← Talent retention	1.06	0.09	11.98	***	par_7	0.77
TR4 ← Talent retention	0.98	0.08	11.99	***	par_8	0.77
TR3 ← Talent retention	1.06	0.08	12.97	***	par_9	0.83
TR2 ← Talent retention	1.16	0.08	14.07	***	par_10	0.89

Note: ***Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (two-tailed)

orientedness create positive increments in talent retention. This finding supports *H2* meaning that a change by 1 SD in people orientedness creates a change of 0.43 SDs in talent retention.

In *H3* the researchers wished to establish the leadership and development – talent retention association. Findings revealed a negative and insignificant association between the two. Regression results ($\beta = -0.03$ CR < 1.96) in Table VI indicate that leadership and development did not explain a significant contribution toward the variance in talent retention. The findings do not lend support to *H3*. Furthermore the results disconfirm prior studies that have found a positive and significant association between leadership and development and talent retention.

Discussion

This study demonstrates the utility of a model that simultaneously considers how employer branding attributes (such as reward strategy, people orientedness and; leadership and development) influence talent retention among employees in higher institutions of learning. An examination of the results reveals several interesting patterns. Universities engagement in rewarding its employees differently is likely to improve the level of retention of employees. In this study, the researchers argue that when management of universities create a workplace that is open, friendly and sincere and emphasizes honesty; this will result into employees wishing that even the following day would find them at work. Furthermore, the results indicate that such an atmosphere of an open and friendly workplace would enhance a motivated staff that would always wish to remain teaching in this university for a long time. The study further finds that employees in universities would remain teaching in their university because they feel that while at such workplace; they will achieve the better future that they have always simply hoped for. Open, friendly, sincere and honest environments create a situation where employees in universities find it unlikely to look for a new job in the near future. These findings are in line with earlier studies such as Sullivan (2004) who argues that employer branding such a rewards, compensation help to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees. The study finds that employees are likely to stay in the university even if they get an opportunity to change their career just because of the open and friendly workplace environment. Open and friendly workplaces make teaching a pleasant career for academic staff rendering them consider the teaching profession as their first choice.

The study further finds that when university creates a workplace where staff innovative and creative thinking are encouraged and valued there is likelihood of improved levels of retention of employees. In this study, the researchers argue that such a workplace where staff innovative and

creative thinking are encouraged and valued results into wishing that even the following day would find them at work. Furthermore, the results indicate that such innovative and creative thinking opportunities would enhance a motivated staff that would always wish to remain teaching in such university for a long time. The study further finds that employees in universities would remain teaching in such university because they feel that while at such workplace; they will achieve the better future that they have always simply hoped for. Innovative and creative thinking among university staff create a situation where employees in universities find it unlikely to look for a new job in the near future. These findings are consistent with earlier studies such as Chapman *et al.* (2005) who state that employer branding HR practices such as competitive financial and non-financial rewards are directly related to talent retention.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that when universities act as workplaces where staff competencies are valued and rewarded; there is likelihood to improve the level of retention of employees. In this study, the researchers argue that when management of universities create a workplace where staff competencies are valued and rewarded; this will result into wishing that even the following day would find them at work. Additionally, the results indicate that such workplaces where staff competencies are valued and rewarded enhance a motivated staff that always wishes to remain teaching in such university for a long time. The study further finds that employees in universities would remain teaching in such university because they feel that while at such workplace staff competencies are valued and rewarded. Workplaces where staff competencies are valued and rewarded create a situation where employees in universities find it unlikely to look for a new employment. These findings are in line with earlier studies such as Gilliver (2009) who argues that employer brand identifies an organization in the marketplace and makes it unique for the employee to stay for longer. The study advances that employees are likely to stay in the university even if they get an opportunity to adjust their career just because of the workplaces where staff competencies are valued and rewarded. Workplaces where staff competencies are valued and rewarded make teaching a pleasant career for academic staff rendering them consider the teaching vocation as their first option.

In this study, people orientedness was found to be a significant predictor of talent retention. Orientedness was exhibited in form of investing heavily in research and design to attracting potential employees and offering challenging workload. The study finds that universities that engage in investing heavily in research and design are likely to improve the level of retention of employees. In this study, the researchers demonstrate that when management of universities invest heavily in research and design, this will result into staff wishing that even the following day would find them at work. Furthermore, the results indicate that investing heavily in research and design would boost a motivated staff that would always wish to stay teaching in their university for a long time. The study further finds that employees in universities would remain teaching in their university because they feel that while at such workplace; they will achieve the better future that they have always simply hoped for. Investing heavily in research and design creates a situation where employees in universities find it unlikely to look for a new job in the offing. These findings are in line with earlier works such as those by Green *et al.* (2013). Green *et al.* argue that talent retention is enhanced by arranging the best performing staff regardless of their national or international diversity. The study finds that employees are likely to stay in the university even if they get a chance to change their career just because management engages in investing heavily in research and design. In this study, we argue that investing heavily in research and design makes teaching a pleasant career for academic staff rendering them consider the teaching occupation as their first choice.

The study unearths the fact that if universities provide challenging workload to their staff, there is a likelihood to improve the level of retention of employees. In this study, the researchers argue that when management of universities provide challenging workload to its staff, this will result into staff wishing that even the following day would find them at work. Furthermore, the results indicate that by universities providing challenging workload; this enhances a motivated staff that would always wish to remain teaching in this university for a long time. The study further finds that employees in universities would remain teaching in their university because they feel that while at such workplace; they will achieve the better future that they have always anticipated for. Providing challenging workload to their staff creates a situation where employees in universities find it unlikely to search for new jobs. These findings are in line with earlier studies such as those by

Jiang and Iles (2011) who argue that by putting in place practices that encourage work/life balance, talent retention will be improved. The study finds that employees are likely to stay in the university even if they get an opportunity to change their career because management provides challenging workload to its staff. In this study, we argue that providing challenging workload to its staff makes teaching a pleasant career for academic staff rendering them consider the teaching profession as their foremost choice.

The study did not find a significant relationship between leadership development practices and; talent retention. This finding appears inconsistent with earlier findings such as that by Toracco (2000). Toracco asserts that knowledge is now recognized as one of an organization's most valuable assets required to retain and leverage the talented staff. Probably this inconsistency in results is due to different settings where the studies were carried out.

Theoretical and managerial implications

This study suggests that organizations that provide more meaningful and responsive approaches to developing and managing talent will be in a stronger position to retain their professionals. Some of the best practices include a coordinated and focused reward management and people orientedness strategy. The findings of this paper can help both government and management of higher institutions of learning. The results suggest that by offering strategic rewards to prospecting and extant staff; management of higher institutions of learning will benefit in a way that employees attitude toward work will change and hence stay for longer. The findings extend the practice in the social exchange theory where one party's actions are contingent on the other party's behavior (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Institutions of higher learning that actively seek to promote people oriented practices will reap in terms of employee prolonged stay at their workplaces. The study has contributed to the continuing talent retention discourse in the field of higher learning. This study has ascertained that employer branding as a multi-dimensional concept encompassing reward strategy and people orientedness is a significant predictor of talent retention. The study finds that in spite of higher institutions of learning engaging in promotion of leadership and development practices as way of employer branding, this may not create an impact on the retention levels of their staff.

Furthermore, given the significance of employer branding, management of institutions of higher learning should set up and implement HRs policies and practices that favor the building of a reward and people orientedness strategy. For example, management of institutions of higher learning can pass on succinct messages to employees that the institution is committed to rewarding employees who excel and to providing an environment where people's concerns take precedence over other issues. Alternatively, institutions of higher learning may increase management's control of rewards so that they can immediately support employees by providing them with appropriate financial and non-financial incentives that help raise staff retention levels. To promote the perceptions of presence of employer branding that result into prolonged stay of employees at work in institutions of higher learning, management are encouraged to closely adhere to reward strategy and people orientedness rules. Also, university management can be provided with reward strategy and people orientedness training to understand better employer branding so that they may carefully enact appropriate employer branding policies and regulations that will later lead to high levels of talent retention at the job. In addition, the promotion of managers at higher institutions of learning can be linked to whether they can successfully implement employer branding based rules and policies.

Conclusion

This study was carried out to examine the relationship between individual measures of employer branding and talent retention. Talent retention was defined as the effort by an employer to keep desirable workers in order to meet business objectives. First of all, the findings of this study reveal some lessons that contribute to the debate employer branding as an exogenous variable and talent retention as an endogenous variable. This study found that both reward strategy and people orientedness have a statistically significant and positive

relationship with talent management, but leadership development does not. One other major lesson is that with people orientedness and reward strategies as an employer branding gimmick, Ugandan institutions of higher learning may appropriately retain their talented employees. The study has proved that appreciation of people orientedness and reward strategies is important for talent retention in institutions of higher learning in Uganda. This implies that universities' management implementation of people orientedness and reward strategies enables the other party (university staff) to socially exchange in form of prolonged stay at the job. Based on this study, institutional performance can be improved by implementing talent retention practices within the organization's culture through employer branding. The findings will be useful for many parties especially the management of higher institutions of learning. Besides that, the management in each institution of higher learning should be more aware of the environment that will enhance talent retention. In addition, the management also needs to identify people orientedness and reward strategies that will quickly enhance talented management. This branding perceived by the staff will alter their mind-set and thus direct them to remain with the institutions for a longer time.

Limitations and areas for further study

There are some limitations in this study that need to be taken care of in future research works. First, is the small sample size. Future researchers should consider a larger sample size and different groups of samples. Second, being cross-sectional in design, inferences cannot be drawn regarding causality among the variables. Third, results may limit the generalizability of our findings to other cultural backgrounds and professions. The researchers recommend that in future a study based on a longitudinal design probably in a different testing ground may be carried out to address the above limitations.

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