

Organizational Culture and Employee Retention Among Employees in Uasin Gishu County Government, Kenya: The Mediating Role of Employee Commitment

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ABSTRACT: Employee retention is central to continuity, institutional memory, and reliable public service delivery, yet county governments operate under administrative, resource, and career-structure conditions that can make the retention of experienced employees difficult. This study examined the effect of organizational culture on employee retention in Uasin Gishu County Government, Kenya, and tested employee commitment as a mediating mechanism. The study adopted an explanatory survey design and targeted 3,431 permanent employees in the county executive and county assembly. A proportionate stratified random sample of 359 employees was selected, of whom 330 returned complete questionnaires, yielding a 91.92% usable response rate. Multi-item measures were assessed using a five-point Likert scale. Reliability, factor analysis, descriptive statistics, partial correlations, multiple regression, and mediation analysis using Hayes PROCESS Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap samples were applied. The direct-effects model explained 56.6% of the variance in employee retention. Work environment ($B = 0.251, p < .05$), leadership communication ($B = 0.328, p < .001$), recognition and rewards ($B = 0.359, p < .05$), and professional development ($B = 0.363, p < .05$) all had positive and statistically significant effects on retention. When employee commitment was introduced, the model explained 70.2% of the variance and commitment remained a strong positive predictor of retention ($B = 0.581, p < .05$). Bootstrap results further showed significant indirect effects through employee commitment for work environment (0.0977, 95% CI [0.0341, 0.1629]), leadership communication (0.1020, 95% CI [0.0479, 0.1569]), recognition and rewards (0.0958, 95% CI [0.0408, 0.1535]), and professional development (0.0942, 95% CI [0.0386, 0.1521]). The study concludes that organizational culture influences retention both directly and through the commitment employees develop toward the county government. The findings support integrated public-sector retention strategies that combine supportive working conditions, credible leadership communication, fair recognition, and visible development pathways rather than treating retention as a compensation issue alone.

KEYWORDS: organizational culture, employee commitment, employee retention, county government, work environment, leadership communication, recognition and rewards, professional development

1. INTRODUCTION

Employee retention has become a strategic concern because organizations lose more than headcount when experienced employees leave. Turnover can disrupt routines, weaken accumulated knowledge, increase replacement and learning costs, and erode service continuity. The turnover literature has consequently shifted from asking only why employees quit to examining why they remain, how attachment develops, and which organizational practices strengthen employees' willingness to stay (Allen et al., 2010; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Hom et al., 2017; Kyndt et al., 2009; Mitchell et al., 2001; Rubenstein et al., 2018). Meta-analytic evidence also links employee turnover with organizational performance, making retention a managerial as well as an employee-relations outcome (Park & Shaw, 2013). In public organizations, the issue is particularly important because institutional memory, specialized procedural knowledge, and stable citizen-facing services cannot always be replaced quickly through external recruitment.

The Kenyan county-government context adds a distinctive institutional setting to the retention problem. Devolution created county administrations with extensive responsibilities for local public services and established county public services as major employers under the Constitution of Kenya and the County Governments Act (Republic of Kenya, 2010, 2012). Uasin Gishu County's development planning similarly depends on functioning institutions and a capable public workforce across administrative

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and service-delivery functions (County Government of Uasin Gishu, 2023). Retention therefore has consequences beyond internal human-resource efficiency: persistent loss of experienced employees can weaken implementation capacity, continuity of programmes, supervision, and responsiveness to citizens. The present study treats retention as employees' expressed willingness and intention to continue working for the county government, reinforced by loyalty, job security, career prospects, valued rewards, work-life considerations, and organizational attachment.

Organizational culture offers a useful lens for examining these retention conditions because culture provides employees with recurring signals about what the organization values, how people are treated, how decisions are communicated, and what behaviors are rewarded. Culture has been conceptualized as a system of shared assumptions, values, and practices that guides organizational members and gives meaning to daily experience (Schein, 2010; Schein & Schein, 2017). Climate and culture scholarship further shows that shared perceptions of organizational practices shape employee attitudes and behavior (Schneider et al., 2013). Competing-values and culture-effectiveness research has associated coherent cultures with important organizational outcomes, although effects vary with context and the specific practices through which culture is experienced (Denison & Mishra, 1995; Hartnell et al., 2011; O'Reilly et al., 1991). More recent culture research therefore cautions against treating culture as a single slogan and instead emphasizes observable practices and patterns that employees encounter (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016).

This study operationalizes organizational culture through four employee-facing dimensions: work environment, leadership communication, recognition and rewards, and professional development. The work environment represents the physical and psychosocial conditions that enable employees to perform, collaborate, feel safe, and manage work demands. Leadership communication represents the clarity, timeliness, openness, listening, and trust embedded in communication from leaders. Recognition and rewards represent whether contribution is acknowledged through fair monetary and non-monetary returns. Professional development represents access to learning, training, feedback, further education, and career advancement. These dimensions are consistent with evidence that supportive work environments, communication quality, rewards, and development opportunities affect employee attitudes and retention-related outcomes (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Brun & Dugas, 2008; Men, 2014; Naz et al., 2020; Noe, 2020).

A direct culture-retention relationship, however, does not fully explain why employees decide to remain. Employee commitment provides a plausible psychological pathway. Commitment reflects the bond linking an employee to an organization and has affective, continuance, and normative components (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meta-analytic evidence shows that organizational commitment is strongly connected with turnover intention and actual turnover, although the magnitude of the relationship differs across commitment forms and contexts (Meyer et al., 2002; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Employees may therefore interpret supportive work conditions, clear communication, fair recognition, and development opportunities as evidence that the organization values them; reciprocation can then occur through stronger commitment and a greater desire to remain. This logic aligns with social exchange theory and perceived organizational support research (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 2020; Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Existing empirical evidence is substantial but fragmented. Supportive work environment has been linked to retention directly and through mediators such as commitment and person-organization fit (Kundu & Lata, 2017; Naz et al., 2020; Yusliza et al., 2021). Leadership studies connect communication, transformational leadership, trust, and commitment with retention-related outcomes (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Men, 2014; Panaccio et al., 2023; Tian et al., 2020). Reward research suggests that both financial and non-financial recognition can shape commitment and intention to stay, but the fairness and meaning of the reward matter (Bradler et al., 2016; Kuvaas, 2006; Newman & Sheikh, 2012; Sorn et al., 2023). Development research similarly finds that training and career opportunities can strengthen human capital and attachment, while the absence of visible progression may encourage exit (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Bartlett, 2001; Jehanzeb et al., 2017; Noe et al., 2014; Tetteh & Asumeng, 2020).

The empirical gap is especially important in devolved public-sector organizations. Much retention evidence comes from private firms, hospitality, manufacturing, education, and cross-national settings, while studies that integrate several cultural dimensions and test commitment as the mechanism are less common in county government. African evidence also shows that commitment-retention relationships may not be uniform across occupations and public institutions. For example, Moshabi et al. (2024) reported nuanced relationships among commitment, job satisfaction, and retention among South African police detectives, while Kenyan studies have highlighted the importance of career development and recognition in public or service organizations (Githu, 2018; Sitati et al., 2019). This suggests that the direct and indirect pathways should be tested empirically rather than assumed.

Accordingly, the study examined whether work environment, leadership communication, recognition and rewards, and professional development influence employee retention among Uasin Gishu County Government employees; whether those dimensions influence employee commitment; whether commitment predicts retention; and whether commitment mediates each

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culture-retention relationship. The study contributes by integrating organizational culture practices with a commitment mechanism in a devolved government context and by estimating indirect effects using bootstrap mediation rather than relying only on stepwise significance conditions (Hayes, 2022).

Retention decisions in public organizations are also shaped by the fact that many human-resource practices are interdependent. Employees do not usually evaluate the work environment, leadership, rewards, and development as isolated signals. Rather, they form an overall judgement about whether the employment relationship is supportive, predictable, fair, and capable of meeting future career needs. Strategic HRM therefore emphasizes internally coherent bundles of practices rather than single interventions, because the effect of one practice can be strengthened or weakened by the quality of others (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Tej et al., 2021). Recent retention studies likewise show that employees respond to combinations of organizational support, leadership, rewards, opportunities, and relational conditions, and that these combinations influence attachment as well as intention to remain (Alshamrani et al., 2023; Chatzoudes & Chatzoglou, 2022; Xuecheng et al., 2022). This perspective is especially relevant to county governments, where salary structures and formal conditions may be regulated, while managers retain greater discretion over communication, recognition, work organization, supervisory support, and access to development. Examining several culture dimensions in the same model therefore helps identify whether retention is associated with a broad cultural system rather than one dominant practice.

A further reason for focusing on employee commitment is that organizational culture may influence retention even where employees face few immediate alternatives or enjoy relatively secure public employment. Remaining because alternatives are limited is conceptually different from remaining because the employee identifies with the organization, feels an obligation to it, or believes the relationship is worth maintaining. Commitment research distinguishes these motives and shows that the quality of attachment matters for behavior and withdrawal (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 2002). Culture and leadership research similarly indicates that employees develop stronger commitment when organizational values and managerial practices are experienced as consistent and supportive (Lok & Crawford, 2004; Schneider et al., 2013). Thus, the present model does not treat retention as a simple response to job security. It tests whether employee-facing cultural practices predict retention after demographic controls and whether those practices also operate through a psychological attachment mechanism. This distinction makes the study relevant to public-sector managers who need not only employees who stay, but employees who remain engaged with the goals and service obligations of the institution.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The theoretical foundation of the study combines social exchange theory, human capital theory, and expectancy theory. Social exchange theory proposes that relationships develop through reciprocal exchanges in which favorable treatment creates obligations to reciprocate (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958). In employment relationships, support, fairness, recognition, development, and respectful communication can signal organizational investment in employees. Employees may reciprocate through commitment, discretionary effort, and continued membership. Organizational support theory operationalizes this exchange logic by explaining how employees form general beliefs about whether the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Komol, Githaiga & Kinuthia, 2025). Meta-analytic and review evidence shows that perceived organizational support is strengthened by favorable work conditions, supervisor support, fairness, and human-resource practices and is associated with affective commitment and reduced withdrawal (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades et al., 2001).

Human capital theory complements the exchange perspective by viewing knowledge and skills as productive investments (Becker, 1964). Training and professional development build employee capability, but employer-sponsored development also carries a relational signal: the organization considers the employee worth investing in. Reviews of workplace learning show benefits for individual performance, adaptability, and organizational outcomes when training is well designed and transferable to work (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Noe et al., 2014). Expectancy theory adds a motivational explanation by proposing that employees are more motivated when they believe effort can produce performance and performance can lead to valued outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Transparent performance expectations, credible communication, fair rewards, and visible development pathways therefore help employees see a meaningful connection between contribution and organizational outcomes. Together, the three theories explain why culture practices can affect retention directly and why commitment can transmit part of that effect.

Employee retention is conceptually distinct from the absence of turnover. Retention encompasses the organization's capacity to sustain employees' willingness to remain, while turnover is an observed exit event. Classic withdrawal models and later retention research show that job attitudes, shocks, embeddedness, alternatives, and personal circumstances jointly influence staying and leaving (Mitchell et al., 2001; Mowday et al., 1982; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Contemporary reviews similarly emphasize that there is

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no single universal cause of turnover; rather, employees interpret bundles of job and organizational experiences over time (Hom et al., 2017; Rubenstein et al., 2018). This study therefore focuses on employees' retention orientation rather than waiting for administrative exit data, which is appropriate for a cross-sectional survey of a current workforce.

A supportive work environment includes physical conditions, psychosocial safety, teamwork, inclusion, adequate resources, respectful interactions, and manageable work-life demands. Kahn's (1990) engagement framework emphasizes psychological safety and availability, while the job demands-resources model proposes that resources can buffer demands and stimulate motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Coworker relationships also shape attitudes and performance because employees experience the organization partly through peers and local social interaction (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). Empirically, supportive work environments have been associated with organizational commitment and retention across sectors (Andari et al., 2021; Hanaysha, 2016; Kundu & Lata, 2017). Naz et al. (2020) found that organizational commitment mediated the supportive-work-environment and retention relationship, and Yusliza et al. (2021) similarly demonstrated that supportive environments contribute to retention through relational mechanisms. Zhenjing et al. (2022) further showed that a positive workplace environment can strengthen commitment as an intermediate employee outcome.

For county employees, the work environment is particularly salient because resource constraints, interdepartmental coordination, citizen-facing pressure, and bureaucratic processes can affect the daily experience of work. A culture that promotes teamwork, openness, inclusion, workplace safety, comfortable physical conditions, and work-life balance should increase employees' assessment that continued membership is desirable. By contrast, chronic friction, poor support, unsafe conditions, or unsustainable demands can make external alternatives more attractive. Social exchange theory predicts that supportive conditions will also strengthen commitment by communicating care and respect. Therefore: H01: Work environment has no statistically significant effect on employee retention in Uasin Gishu County Government. H05: Work environment has no statistically significant effect on employee commitment in Uasin Gishu County Government.

Leadership communication is the process through which leaders provide direction, explain decisions, listen, give feedback, and construct shared meaning. Leadership is inherently communicative because employees infer priorities, fairness, inclusion, and trust from what leaders say, how consistently they say it, and whether communication is matched by action (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). Strategic internal communication research links transparent and participative communication with employee satisfaction and stronger employee-organization relationships (Men, 2014; Ruck & Welch, 2012). Mayfield and Mayfield (2002) identify leader communication as a critical path to employee commitment, while Chen et al. (2006) associate organizational communication with commitment and job outcomes. Transformational leadership evidence likewise suggests that articulating vision and providing individualized support can improve employee attitudes (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Puni et al., 2021).

Communication can influence retention in two ways. First, clarity reduces uncertainty about expectations, organizational changes, and future prospects. Second, listening and timely feedback convey respect and membership, thereby strengthening relational attachment. Tian et al. (2020) found that communication was an important mechanism in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee retention, and Panaccio et al. (2023) showed that supervisor behavior can promote affective commitment and retention. Nanjundeswaraswamy (2023) also reported that leadership styles relate to employee commitment through attitudinal mechanisms. In a county government where policies, political-administrative interfaces, and service priorities can change, credible leadership communication may be especially important for stability. Therefore: H02: Leadership communication has no statistically significant effect on employee retention in Uasin Gishu County Government. H06: Leadership communication has no statistically significant effect on employee commitment in Uasin Gishu County Government.

Recognition and rewards translate organizational valuation into tangible and symbolic returns. Reward systems include pay, incentives, promotion, appreciation, awards, public acknowledgement, and performance feedback. From an expectancy perspective, employees are more motivated when valued rewards are credibly connected to performance (Vroom, 1964). Recognition also has a social component because acknowledgement communicates that effort is noticed. Brun and Dugas (2008) conceptualize recognition as a human-resource practice that reinforces identity and contribution, while experimental evidence shows that recognition can improve effort and performance (Bradler et al., 2016). Nevertheless, reward effects are not automatically positive. Self-determination research cautions that controlling extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation in some settings, whereas informational and fairly administered rewards may support competence and value (Deci et al., 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Retention research generally supports the importance of reward adequacy and fairness. Kuvaas (2006) found that performance appraisal and reward perceptions are associated with employee outcomes, Kwenin et al. (2013) linked rewards and HR policies with retention, and Sorn et al. (2023) emphasized compensation as an important retention mechanism. Amadi et al. (2021) similarly identified reward systems as relevant to retention in banking. For commitment, Newman and Sheikh (2012) and Adekoya

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and Guobiazor (2023) show that organizational rewards and leadership-related practices can shape employee commitment. In Kenya, Sitati et al. (2019) found employee recognition relevant to retention in the hotel sector, suggesting that acknowledgement matters even where monetary flexibility is constrained. Public organizations may have rigid salary structures, making transparent non-monetary recognition, fair appraisal, development-linked rewards, and acknowledgement especially important. Therefore: H03: Recognition and rewards have no statistically significant effect on employee retention in Uasin Gishu County Government. H07: Recognition and rewards have no statistically significant effect on employee commitment in Uasin Gishu County Government. Professional development concerns the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills, receive developmental feedback, pursue further education, attend training, and progress through a career path. Human capital theory expects training to raise productive capacity (Becker, 1964), while training scholarship demonstrates that learning and development can produce individual and organizational benefits when opportunities are relevant and supported (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Noe, 2020). Employee reactions to development are also relational. Bartlett (2001) found a positive relationship between training and organizational commitment, and Jehanzeb et al. (2017) linked training and career development with retention while emphasizing person-organization fit. Park et al. (2021) further reported that managerial coaching skills affect commitment through learning mechanisms. Development therefore combines economic value, employability, self-efficacy, and a signal of organizational support.

The relationship can nevertheless be complex. Development can increase external marketability, meaning trained employees may have more alternatives. Retention depends on whether the organization also offers credible opportunities to apply new skills and progress internally. Career-development research thus emphasizes pathways, support, and advancement rather than isolated training events (Ferdiana et al., 2023; Tetteh & Asumeng, 2020). Elsafty and Oraby (2022) found a positive training-retention relationship, while Frimayasa (2021) linked career development and work environment with retention. Kenyan evidence from public universities also indicates that career development can strengthen employee commitment (Githu, 2018). These findings suggest that professional development in county government should be understood as an ongoing cultural practice rather than occasional attendance at workshops. Therefore: H04: Professional development has no statistically significant effect on employee retention in Uasin Gishu County Government. H08: Professional development has no statistically significant effect on employee commitment in Uasin Gishu County Government.

Employee commitment captures the psychological link between an employee and the employing organization. Meyer and Allen's three-component framework distinguishes affective commitment based on emotional attachment, continuance commitment based on perceived costs of leaving, and normative commitment based on felt obligation to remain (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Commitment has deep roots in organizational research because it is associated with effort, citizenship, attendance, and withdrawal behavior. Meta-analysis confirms that affective commitment, in particular, is negatively related to turnover and turnover intentions (Meyer et al., 2002), while Tett and Meyer (1993) demonstrate that commitment contributes to turnover processes alongside job satisfaction. Saks (2006) also situates engagement and organizational attitudes within reciprocal employee-organization relationships.

Recent evidence continues to connect commitment with retention, although the strength and direction can vary by workforce and institutional setting. Agus and Selvaraj (2020) found that employee commitment mediated the relationship between quality of work life and intention to stay. Moshabi et al. (2024), however, reported more nuanced relationships among commitment, job satisfaction, and retention in a public-security context, highlighting the importance of testing rather than assuming the mechanism. Chatzoudes and Chatzoglou (2022) similarly frame retention as a multivariate outcome, while Almerri (2023) links organizational culture with retention through employee-related mechanisms. Hence: H09: Employee commitment has no statistically significant effect on employee retention in Uasin Gishu County Government.

The mediation argument integrates the preceding relationships. If employees perceive the work environment as supportive, leadership communication as credible, rewards as fair and meaningful, and development opportunities as genuine, they receive repeated signals that the organization values their contribution. Social exchange theory predicts reciprocal attachment (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), organizational support research predicts stronger affective commitment (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Rhoades et al., 2001), and commitment theory predicts a lower propensity to leave (Meyer et al., 2002). Empirical studies have already identified commitment as a mediator in supportive-environment and retention relationships (Naz et al., 2020) and in quality-of-work-life and intention-to-stay relationships (Agus & Selvaraj, 2020). Osman et al. (2024) also demonstrate that culture-related retention relationships can operate through relational mediators such as trust. The current study therefore tests the more specific proposition that employee commitment transmits part of the influence of each organizational culture dimension to retention. H10a: Employee commitment does not mediate the relationship between work environment and employee retention. H10b: Employee commitment does not mediate the relationship between leadership communication and employee retention. H10c: Employee commitment does not mediate the relationship between recognition and rewards and employee

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retention. H10d: Employee commitment does not mediate the relationship between professional development and employee retention.

Organizational culture is best understood in this study as a pattern of shared meanings expressed through recurring practices. Schein and Schein (2017) distinguish deeper assumptions from visible artifacts and espoused values, while Schneider et al. (2013) emphasize that employees experience culture through climates created around particular practices. This is important for measurement because a broad statement such as 'the county has a good culture' provides little guidance to managers. By disaggregating culture into work environment, leadership communication, recognition and rewards, and professional development, the study focuses on domains in which employees can observe concrete behavior and managers can take practical action. The four dimensions are also theoretically complementary. Work environment supplies the conditions and social resources for performing work; leadership communication provides information and relational meaning; recognition and rewards indicate whether contribution is valued; and professional development signals whether the employment relationship has a future. Culture-effectiveness research has long shown that shared values become consequential when they are embedded in management practices and coordinated patterns of behavior (Denison & Mishra, 1995; Hartnell et al., 2011). Leadership-culture studies further indicate that culture and leadership mutually reinforce employee attitudes, including commitment (Lok & Crawford, 2004). The present framework therefore treats the four dimensions as distinct predictors but interprets them collectively as the employee-facing architecture of organizational culture.

The retention consequences of these practices can be explained through both instrumental and relational pathways. Instrumentally, adequate resources, clear information, valued rewards, and development opportunities make the current employment arrangement more attractive and reduce reasons to search for alternatives. Relationally, the same practices tell employees whether the organization respects them, keeps promises, recognizes effort, and is willing to invest in their future. Social exchange theory predicts that repeated favorable exchanges create reciprocal obligations and more durable relationships (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Perceived organizational support research provides strong evidence for this mechanism: favorable treatment contributes to beliefs that the organization values employees, which are subsequently associated with affective commitment, performance, and lower withdrawal (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This reasoning also helps explain why similar HR practices can produce different retention outcomes across organizations. A training programme delivered as an isolated compliance exercise may have less relational value than one linked to career opportunities, just as a reward whose criteria are opaque may be less motivating than a smaller but transparently earned recognition. The quality and credibility of implementation are therefore part of the cultural signal.

Employee commitment is particularly suitable as a mediator because it translates organizational experiences into a more stable employee-organization bond. Affective commitment reflects emotional attachment and identification, normative commitment reflects a felt obligation to remain, and continuance commitment reflects awareness of the costs associated with leaving (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Although these components have different antecedents and consequences, the broad commitment construct captures an important transition between evaluating workplace practices and forming a retention orientation. Meta-analytic evidence shows that affective and normative commitment generally have stronger desirable relationships with work outcomes than continuance commitment, and that commitment is negatively associated with withdrawal and turnover (Meyer et al., 2002; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Rhoades et al. (2001) further show that perceived organizational support contributes to affective commitment, providing a direct bridge between social exchange mechanisms and employee attachment. In this study, the mediation proposition is therefore not that culture mechanically causes retention, but that favorable cultural experiences can strengthen commitment and that stronger commitment is associated with a greater willingness to remain. Because other mechanisms such as job satisfaction, embeddedness, perceived alternatives, and person-organization fit may operate simultaneously, partial rather than complete mediation is theoretically plausible (Hausknecht et al., 2009; Mitchell et al., 2001; Naz et al., 2020).

The public-sector setting also complicates the expected relationships in useful ways. Formal pay scales, promotion rules, statutory procedures, and political-administrative structures may limit managerial discretion over some employment outcomes, yet employees still experience substantial variation in supervisory communication, day-to-day support, recognition, learning access, task organization, and local workplace climate. This means culture can remain influential even where employment conditions are partly standardized by law or policy. The County Governments Act establishes administrative structures for county public services, but the quality with which employees encounter those structures is produced through managerial practice (Republic of Kenya, 2012). Similarly, the county's development agenda depends on institutional capacity across sectors, making continuity of skilled employees an operational concern rather than merely an HR statistic (County Government of Uasin Gishu, 2023). Evidence from developing-country and African settings supports the importance of context: leadership and HR practices have been associated

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with commitment and retention, but effects vary across organizations and employee groups (Puni et al., 2021; Sitati et al., 2019; Xuecheng et al., 2022). Testing the framework within Uasin Gishu County Government therefore provides a context-specific assessment of whether widely discussed retention mechanisms operate within devolved public administration.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an explanatory survey design because the objective was to estimate relationships among organizational culture dimensions, employee commitment, and employee retention without manipulating the predictors. Explanatory quantitative designs are appropriate where theoretically specified relationships are tested using standardized measures and inferential statistics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The target population comprised 3,431 permanent employees of Uasin Gishu County Government drawn from the county executive and county assembly. The sampling frame was stratified by directorate or organizational unit so that the two arms of county government and their constituent units were represented.

The sample size was determined using Yamane's finite-population approach at a 5% margin of error, producing a target of 359 employees. Proportionate stratified random sampling allocated respondents across directorates, after which simple random sampling was used within strata. Of the 359 questionnaires distributed, 330 were fully completed and retained for analysis. This yielded a usable response rate of 91.92%. The achieved sample was sufficient for the planned multiple regression, factor analysis, and mediation procedures, particularly given the number of predictors and indicators included in the study (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2016).

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire. All focal constructs used multi-item statements rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Employee retention had 10 items reflecting intention to stay, loyalty, job security, career prospects, recognition, compensation and benefits, work-life balance, cultural alignment, development, and advocacy. Employee commitment had 13 items reflecting attachment, effort, loyalty, obligation, and perceived costs of leaving, consistent with the multidimensional commitment tradition (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Work environment, leadership communication, recognition and rewards, and professional development each had seven items. The constructs were informed by established organizational behavior and HRM literature, including Kahn (1990), Men (2014), Kuvaas (2006), and Noe (2020). Education, age bracket, and gender were entered as control variables because employee characteristics can influence work attitudes and retention patterns.

Instrument quality was assessed before hypothesis testing. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, with .70 treated as a conventional minimum for research scales. Construct validity was assessed using exploratory factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy, Bartlett's test of sphericity, communalities, and extracted variance (Hair et al., 2019). Employee retention, work environment, leadership communication, recognition and rewards, and professional development each yielded a dominant component with high explained variance; employee commitment produced two components, which is compatible with its multidimensional conceptualization. The study also considered common-method concerns associated with self-report questionnaires by assuring anonymity, separating construct sections, using clear item wording, and statistically checking the factor structure (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Data were analyzed in SPSS using descriptive statistics, partial Pearson correlations, multiple regression, and mediation analysis. Assumptions were assessed through normal probability plots, linearity plots, variance inflation factors and tolerance values, the Durbin-Watson statistic, and Levene's test. The direct regression model estimated employee retention as a function of work environment, leadership communication, recognition and rewards, professional development, and the three controls. A subsequent model added employee commitment to evaluate its unique contribution. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$.

Mediation was tested with Hayes PROCESS Model 4 using 5,000 bootstrap samples (Hayes, 2022). Four separate simple-mediation models were estimated, one for each organizational culture dimension. In each model, the culture dimension predicted employee commitment (path a), employee commitment predicted retention while controlling for the culture dimension (path b), and the indirect effect was computed as the product $a \times b$. Mediation was considered statistically significant where the 95% bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero. This approach avoids dependence on the normality assumption for indirect effects and provides a more direct test of mediation than older causal-steps procedures.

Ethical safeguards included voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and restriction of the questionnaire to information necessary for the study. Formal authorization was sought from the relevant research and county authorities, including the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation and the county government. No names were included in the analytical dataset, and results were reported in aggregate form.

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Table 1: Measurement of variables

Variable	Role	Items	Operationalization	Key sources
Employee retention (ER)	Dependent variable	10	Five-point Likert scale: intention to stay, loyalty, job security, career prospects, recognition, rewards/benefits, work-life balance, value alignment, development, advocacy	Allen et al. (2010); Kyndt et al. (2009); Mitchell et al. (2001)
Work environment (WE)	Independent variable	7	Supportive environment, teamwork, openness, inclusion, safety, physical conditions, work-life balance	Bakker & Demerouti (2007); Kahn (1990); Naz et al. (2020)
Leadership communication (LC)	Independent variable	7	Vision clarity, timely feedback, listening, transparency, change communication, trust, communication channels	Mayfield & Mayfield (2002); Men (2014); Ruck & Welch (2012)
Recognition and rewards (RR)	Independent variable	7	Recognition, appreciation, reward adequacy, fairness, public acknowledgement, performance incentives, non-monetary rewards	Brun & Dugas (2008); Kuvaas (2006); Newman & Sheikh (2012)
Professional development (PD)	Independent variable	7	Training, learning resources, further education, feedback, continuous learning, growth, career pathways	Aguinis & Kraiger (2009); Bartlett (2001); Noe (2020)
Employee commitment (EC)	Mediator	13	Attachment, effort, loyalty, intention to remain, obligation and perceived costs of leaving	Allen & Meyer (1990); Meyer & Allen (1991); Meyer et al. (2002)
Education, age bracket, gender	Controls	3	Categorical employee characteristics	Study questionnaire

Source: Research data (2026).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Response rate

The 330 usable questionnaires contained complete data for the six study constructs. The response rate and data completeness reduced the risk of loss of statistical power due to listwise deletion. Descriptive results indicated generally moderate evaluations of the organizational environment: leadership communication and recognition and rewards were slightly above the midpoint, while work environment and professional development were slightly below or around the midpoint. Employee retention and commitment also averaged close to the scale midpoint.

Table 2: Response rate

Response category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires distributed	359	100.00
Complete and usable responses	330	91.92
Non-response	29	8.08

Source: Research data (2026).

4.2 Descriptive statistics and reliability

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and reliability of study constructs

Construct	N	Mean	SD	Items	Cronbach alpha
Employee retention (ER)	330	3.0233	1.11523	10	.970

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Construct	N	Mean	SD	Items	Cronbach alpha
Employee commitment (EC)	330	3.0531	.75047	13	.852
Work environment (WE)	330	2.8355	1.07484	7	.954
Leadership communication (LC)	330	3.1095	1.12229	7	.959
Recognition and rewards (RR)	330	3.0688	1.11579	7	.957
Professional development (PD)	330	2.9766	1.13712	7	.961

Source: Research data (2026).

Reliability was strong across the measures. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .852 for employee commitment to .970 for employee retention, with the four organizational culture scales ranging from .954 to .961. The values are above the conventional .70 threshold and indicate substantial internal consistency. Factor-analysis diagnostics were also satisfactory. KMO values ranged from .881 to .976 and all Bartlett tests were statistically significant at $p < .001$, indicating that the correlation matrices were factorable. Employee retention and the four culture dimensions each had a strong dominant component explaining between 78.4% and 81.1% of the variance. Employee commitment extracted two components explaining 60.99% cumulatively, consistent with the theoretical expectation that commitment can contain distinguishable forms of attachment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

The regression diagnostics did not indicate material assumption violations. Tolerance values ranged from .896 to .990 and variance inflation factors ranged from 1.011 to 1.116, well below levels commonly associated with harmful multicollinearity. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 2.120, indicating no meaningful residual autocorrelation. Levene's test based on the mean was not statistically significant ($p = .136$), supporting homogeneity of variance. The normal probability and linearity plots also showed acceptable patterns for regression analysis. Taken together, these checks supported proceeding with correlation, regression, and mediation tests (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2019).

4.3 Validity and diagnostic tests

Table 4: Factor-analysis and regression diagnostic summary

Test/construct	KMO / statistic	Significance	Factors	Variance
Employee retention	.976	$p < .05$	1	78.963%
Employee commitment	.881	$p < .05$	2	60.990%
Work environment	.950	$p < .05$	1	78.413%
Leadership communication	.956	$p < .05$	1	80.274%
Recognition and rewards	.953	$p < .05$	1	79.415%
Professional development	.952	$p < .05$	1	81.110%
Multicollinearity	VIF 1.011-1.116	Tolerance .896-.990		
Autocorrelation	Durbin-Watson = 2.120			
Homoscedasticity	Levene = 1.317	$p = .136$		

Source: Research data (2026).

4.4 Correlation analysis

Partial correlations controlling for education, age bracket, and gender showed that employee retention was positively associated with work environment ($r = .348$, $p < .001$), leadership communication ($r = .451$, $p < .001$), recognition and rewards ($r = .451$, $p < .001$), professional development ($r = .439$, $p < .001$), and employee commitment ($r = .592$, $p < .001$). Employee commitment was also positively correlated with each culture dimension, although the magnitudes were smaller, ranging from $r = .172$ to $r = .196$. The pattern is theoretically coherent: the culture dimensions were related to retention, commitment was strongly related to retention, and culture dimensions were related to commitment, creating the empirical conditions for examining indirect effects.

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Table 5: Partial correlations among study constructs controlling for education, age bracket, and gender

Variable	ER	WE	LC	RR	PD	EC
ER	1.000	.348***	.451***	.451***	.439***	.592***
WE	.348***	1.000	.192***	.102	.015	.172**
LC	.451***	.192***	1.000	.101	.099	.196***
RR	.451***	.102	.101	1.000	.090	.182**
PD	.439***	.015	.099	.090	1.000	.181**
EC	.592***	.172**	.196***	.182**	.181**	1.000

N = 330. Partial-correlation *df* = 325. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001. Source: Research data (2026).

4.5 Regression analysis

The control-only model was not statistically significant, $R^2 = .015$, adjusted $R^2 = .006$, $F = 1.630$, $p = .182$. Education, age bracket, and gender did not individually predict retention at $p < .05$. When the four organizational culture dimensions were added, the model became highly significant and explained 56.6% of the variance in employee retention, $R = .752$, $R^2 = .566$, adjusted $R^2 = .556$, $F = 59.886$, $p < .05$. Work environment had a positive significant effect ($B = .251$, $SE = .039$, $\beta = .242$, $p < .05$), as did leadership communication ($B = .328$, $SE = .038$, $\beta = .330$, $p < .05$), recognition and rewards ($B = .359$, $SE = .037$, $\beta = .359$, $p < .05$), and professional development ($B = .363$, $SE = .037$, $\beta = .370$, $p < .05$). H01-H04 were therefore rejected.

The model that added employee commitment explained 70.2% of the variance in retention, $R = .838$, $R^2 = .702$, adjusted $R^2 = .695$, $F = 94.695$, $p < .001$. Employee commitment had a strong positive effect on retention ($B = .581$, $SE = .048$, $\beta = .391$, $t = 12.147$, $p < .05$), leading to rejection of H09. All four culture dimensions remained statistically significant after commitment was entered: work environment $B = .199$, leadership communication $B = .272$, recognition and rewards $B = .304$, and professional development $B = .304$, all $p < .05$. This persistence of direct effects indicates that commitment did not absorb the entire culture-retention relationship and is consistent with partial rather than full mediation.

Table 6: Hierarchical regression results for employee retention

Predictor/statistic	Model 1: Controls B (SE)	Model 2: Culture B (SE)	Model 3: + Commitment B (SE)
Constant	2.703 (.287)***	-1.012 (.266)***	-2.144 (.239)***
Education	.075 (.055)	.029 (.037)	.027 (.031)
Age bracket	-.081 (.075)	-.037 (.050)	-.036 (.042)
Gender	.162 (.123)	.068 (.083)	.088 (.069)
Work environment (WE)	-	.251 (.039)***	.199 (.033)***
Leadership communication (LC)	-	.328 (.038)***	.272 (.032)***
Recognition and rewards (RR)	-	.359 (.037)***	.304 (.031)***
Professional development (PD)	-	.363 (.037)***	.304 (.031)***
Employee commitment (EC)	-	-	.581 (.048)***
R square	.015	.566	.702
Adjusted R square	.006	.556	.695
F statistic	1.630	59.886***	94.695***

Dependent variable = employee retention. *** *p* < .001. Source: Research data (2026).

4.6 Mediation analysis

PROCESS Model 4 provided direct evidence on the mediation hypotheses. Work environment significantly predicted commitment ($a = .1206$, $p = .0018$) and had an indirect effect on retention of .0977; the 95% bootstrap confidence interval [.0341, .1629] excluded zero. Leadership communication significantly predicted commitment ($a = .1318$, $p = .0004$) and had an indirect effect of

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.1020, 95% CI [.0479, .1569]. Recognition and rewards significantly predicted commitment ($a = .1230$, $p = .0009$) and had an indirect effect of .0958, 95% CI [.0408, .1535]. Professional development significantly predicted commitment ($a = .1204$, $p = .0010$) and had an indirect effect of .0942, 95% CI [.0386, .1521]. H05-H08 and H10a-H10d were therefore rejected. Because the corresponding direct effects remained significant in the mediation models, employee commitment served as a partial mediator for each organizational culture dimension.

Table 7: Bootstrap mediation results for employee commitment

Predictor	Path a B (SE)	p	Direct c' B (SE)	Indirect	BootSE	95% bootstrap CI	Mediation
Work environment	.1206 (.0384)	.0018	.2629 (.0447)	.0977	.0322	[.0341, .1629]	Partial
Leadership communication	.1318 (.0365)	.0004	.3445 (.0410)	.1020	.0280	[.0479, .1569]	Partial
Recognition and rewards	.1230 (.0370)	.0009	.3540 (.0410)	.0958	.0290	[.0408, .1535]	Partial
Professional development	.1204 (.0360)	.0010	.3360 (.0410)	.0942	.0290	[.0386, .1521]	Partial

Note. PROCESS Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap samples. All direct effects shown were $p < .001$. Confidence intervals that exclude zero indicate significant indirect effects. Source: Research data (2026).

Table 8: Summary of hypothesis decisions

Hypothesis	Relationship	Effect	p value / CI	Decision
H01	WE → ER	B = .251	$p < .001$	Rejected
H02	LC → ER	B = .328	$p < .001$	Rejected
H03	RR → ER	B = .359	$p < .001$	Rejected
H04	PD → ER	B = .363	$p < .001$	Rejected
H05	WE → EC	B = .1206	$p = .0018$	Rejected
H06	LC → EC	B = .1318	$p = .0004$	Rejected
H07	RR → EC	B = .1230	$p = .0009$	Rejected
H08	PD → EC	B = .1204	$p = .0010$	Rejected
H09	EC → ER	B = .581	$p < .001$	Rejected
H10a	WE → EC → ER	Indirect = .0977	CI [.0341, .1629]	Rejected
H10b	LC → EC → ER	Indirect = .1020	CI [.0479, .1569]	Rejected
H10c	RR → EC → ER	Indirect = .0958	CI [.0408, .1535]	Rejected
H10d	PD → EC → ER	Indirect = .0942	CI [.0386, .1521]	Rejected

Source: Research data (2026).

4.7 Discussion of findings

The findings provide strong evidence that organizational culture is materially related to employee retention in the county-government setting. The four culture dimensions jointly explained a substantial proportion of variance beyond education, age, and gender, while demographic controls alone explained very little. This pattern supports a management interpretation of retention: employees' day-to-day organizational experiences were more closely associated with their willingness to stay than the basic demographic attributes included in the model. This is consistent with broad retention reviews that place job and organizational conditions among the most actionable determinants of employee withdrawal (Allen et al., 2010; Chatzoudes & Chatzoglou, 2022; Hom et al., 2017; Rubenstein et al., 2018).

Work environment had a positive direct effect on retention and a positive effect on commitment. The result supports job demands-resources reasoning that resources such as support, safety, teamwork, and manageable conditions foster positive

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employee states (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). It also aligns with studies showing that supportive environments are associated with commitment and retention (Kundu & Lata, 2017; Naz et al., 2020; Yusliza et al., 2021). The indirect effect through commitment is particularly important because it shows that favorable conditions are not only comfortable; they appear to change how employees psychologically relate to the organization. The result is also compatible with organizational support theory, under which discretionary favorable treatment encourages stronger attachment and reciprocity (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Leadership communication was a comparatively strong predictor of retention and also improved commitment. Employees who perceive leaders as clear, responsive, transparent, and willing to listen are more likely to understand organizational direction and feel included in it. The finding supports the communicative perspective of leadership, which treats meaning-making and relationship-building as central leadership functions (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). It is also consistent with Mayfield and Mayfield's (2002) argument that leader communication creates pathways to commitment and with Men (2014), who links strategic internal communication and leadership to employee satisfaction. The result complements evidence that communication can transmit the retention effects of leadership (Tian et al., 2020) and that supervisor behavior influences commitment and eventual turnover (Panaccio et al., 2023). For county managers, communication therefore functions as an HR practice rather than only an information-delivery task.

Recognition and rewards had a positive and significant direct effect on retention and a significant indirect effect through commitment. This supports the idea that employees respond not only to the economic value of rewards but also to what recognition communicates about status, fairness, and appreciation. The result is consistent with Brun and Dugas (2008), Kwenin et al. (2013), and Sorn et al. (2023), and it parallels Kenyan evidence that recognition contributes to retention (Sitati et al., 2019). The findings also fit expectancy theory because employees are more likely to remain where they can see a credible relationship between contribution and valued outcomes (Vroom, 1964). At the same time, the result should not be interpreted as a call for indiscriminate incentives. Motivation research indicates that rewards are most effective when they are fair, informative, and supportive rather than controlling (Deci et al., 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In a public service context with constrained pay discretion, transparent recognition, fair appraisal, development opportunities, and acknowledgement of performance may therefore be particularly important.

Professional development produced the largest standardized coefficient in the direct culture model and remained significant when commitment was included. This indicates that employees value not only the present job but also whether the organization provides a future. The result agrees with human capital theory and training research, which view learning as an investment in productive capacity (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Becker, 1964; Noe, 2020). It also aligns with empirical evidence connecting training and career development with commitment and retention (Bartlett, 2001; Elsafty & Oraby, 2022; Jehanzeb et al., 2017; Park et al., 2021; Tetteh & Asumeng, 2020). The Kenyan public-university evidence reported by Githu (2018) further supports the link between career development and commitment. For a county government, this result implies that training should be connected to competency growth, internal mobility, succession, and transparent career paths; isolated workshops may be less effective if employees cannot see how new skills translate into advancement or meaningful work.

Employee commitment itself was a strong positive predictor of retention and increased explained variance markedly when added to the model. The result is consistent with the three-component commitment framework and the extensive evidence connecting organizational attachment with withdrawal behavior (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 2002; Tett & Meyer, 1993). It also supports Mowday et al.'s (1982) long-standing argument that commitment is central to employee-organization linkages. Yet commitment did not eliminate the direct effects of the culture dimensions. This is theoretically useful: culture can influence retention through multiple mechanisms, including satisfaction, perceived support, embeddedness, fit, trust, and practical switching costs, not only commitment. The partial mediation pattern therefore provides a more realistic explanation than a single-mechanism model.

All four indirect effects were statistically significant, providing the study's main theoretical contribution. The strongest indirect effect was observed for leadership communication, although the indirect effects were broadly similar in size. These findings support social exchange theory because favorable organizational practices were associated with stronger commitment, which in turn predicted retention (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). They also mirror Naz et al. (2020), who found organizational commitment to mediate the supportive-work-environment and retention relationship, and Agus and Selvaraj (2020), who found commitment to mediate between quality of work life and intention to stay. The present study extends that logic by demonstrating the same commitment pathway across four distinct culture dimensions in a devolved Kenyan public institution.

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted within the study design. The data were cross-sectional and self-reported, so temporal ordering cannot be established as strongly as in longitudinal designs. Common-method bias cannot be completely ruled

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out despite instrument and factor-analysis safeguards (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, employee retention was measured as a current attitudinal orientation rather than subsequent administrative turnover. These limitations do not invalidate the observed associations, but they mean the results are best understood as explanatory evidence consistent with the proposed mechanism rather than definitive causal proof. Future work could link survey measures with later exit records, compare counties, and evaluate whether commitment pathways differ across occupational groups, employment terms, or career stages.

The relative magnitudes of the direct effects also offer a useful substantive interpretation. Professional development had the largest standardized coefficient in the direct model, followed closely by recognition and rewards and leadership communication, while work environment remained positive and significant. The coefficients should not be read as a permanent ranking of what employees value, because they are conditional on the variables being entered together and on the measures used in this sample. Nevertheless, the pattern suggests that retention was especially sensitive to whether employees could see future growth, receive valued acknowledgement, and obtain credible direction from leaders. This is consistent with the idea that employees evaluate both the present quality and the future promise of the employment relationship. Development strengthens capability and future prospects (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Noe, 2020); recognition confirms that current contribution is valued (Brun & Dugas, 2008; Bradler et al., 2016); and communication reduces uncertainty and strengthens employee-organization relationships (Men, 2014; Ruck & Welch, 2012). A county retention strategy should therefore avoid concentrating resources on only one lever. Improvements are more likely to be durable when the practices reinforce one another as a coherent employment experience (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Tej et al., 2021).

The increase in explained variance from the direct culture model to the model including employee commitment is equally important. It indicates that commitment added information about retention beyond the observable culture dimensions themselves. At the same time, all four direct effects remained significant, demonstrating that employees' retention orientations were not reducible to commitment alone. In practical terms, a supportive culture can make staying attractive directly while also creating attachment that reinforces staying. This dual pathway is consistent with retention models that recognize multiple reasons for remaining, including fit, links, sacrifice, support, satisfaction, and commitment (Hausknecht et al., 2009; Mitchell et al., 2001; Rubenstein et al., 2018). It also explains why isolated interventions may disappoint managers. For example, a training opportunity can enhance commitment, but its direct retention value may still depend on whether the employee can apply new skills or access progression. Recognition may increase attachment, yet its direct effect can be weakened if communication is poor or the workplace is unsupportive. The results therefore support coordinated implementation and regular employee feedback to ensure that HR practices are experienced as credible rather than symbolic.

For public management, the mediation findings shift attention from merely retaining positions to sustaining the quality of the employment relationship. A workforce can exhibit low immediate turnover because of labor-market conditions or job security while still displaying weak attachment, low advocacy, or a willingness to exit when alternatives emerge. The significant commitment pathway suggests that county managers should monitor indicators of attachment alongside turnover statistics. Periodic employee surveys, structured stay interviews, exit analysis, promotion and training participation records, and departmental retention profiles can reveal whether favorable practices are translating into stronger commitment. Such monitoring should remain developmental rather than punitive. The objective is to identify units where communication, recognition, work conditions, or career pathways are weakening the employee-organization bond and to correct those conditions early. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that retention is a process shaped by accumulated experiences rather than a single exit decision (Hom et al., 2017; Rubenstein et al., 2018), and with strategic HRM research linking coherent people practices to commitment and retention (Alshamrani et al., 2023; Chatzoudes & Chatzoglou, 2022).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that organizational culture is an important determinant of employee retention in Uasin Gishu County Government. A supportive work environment, effective leadership communication, fair recognition and rewards, and professional development each increased employees' reported willingness to remain. Employee commitment also had a strong positive effect on retention and partially transmitted the effect of every culture dimension. Retention is therefore not explained adequately by a single human-resource practice. It emerges from a system of organizational experiences that shape both the practical attractiveness of staying and the psychological bond employees form with the county government.

For policy and management, the county government should adopt an integrated retention framework. First, management should improve the work environment through safe and adequately resourced workplaces, teamwork, inclusion, employee welfare, and realistic work-life arrangements. Second, county leaders should institutionalize regular two-way communication, timely feedback, transparent explanation of organizational changes, and mechanisms through which employee concerns receive visible responses.

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Third, recognition systems should be transparent and equitable and should combine lawful financial rewards with non-financial recognition, appreciation, developmental assignments, and fair performance feedback. Fourth, professional development should be linked to competency frameworks, succession planning, internal mobility, and clear career progression so employees can see a future within the organization.

The study contributes theoretically by showing that employee commitment is a consistent but partial mechanism connecting organizational culture practices to retention. It contributes empirically by providing evidence from a devolved county-government context, where retention has direct implications for service continuity and institutional capacity. Future studies should use longitudinal designs, administrative turnover records, and multi-county samples; distinguish affective, continuance, and normative commitment as separate mediators; and test additional mechanisms such as job embeddedness, organizational trust, perceived organizational support, and person-organization fit. Comparative studies between county executives, assemblies, and national public institutions would also clarify how institutional arrangements condition culture-retention relationships.

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