

Evaluation of the Relationship between Talent Management and Perceived Organizational Ethics in Public Universities, Ghana

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<https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.2024.coet.45642>

Abstract – Two crucial concepts that influence an institution's culture and operational efficacy are talent management and organizational ethics. This study examines the relationship between talent management practices and perceived organizational ethics in Ghana's public universities. By integrating strategic recruitment, comprehensive development programs, retention policies, and rigorous performance management, the study explores how these elements influence the ethical climate within academic institutions. Using a mixed-method approach, the research employs both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews involving faculty, administrative staff, and management across multiple universities. Findings reveal a positive correlation between effective talent management and the perception of organizational ethics, highlighting that institutions with robust talent framework tend to exhibit higher levels of ethical standards. Ethical cultures characterized by transparency, fairness, and accountability were observed in institutions with proactive talent management systems. The study underscores the critical role of embedding ethical standards into all talent-related processes to enhance institutional integrity. Recommendations include integrating ethics into recruitment, development, and retention policies while fostering leadership practices that uphold ethical principles.

Keywords – Talent Management, Perceived Organizational Ethics, Retention Policies, Strategic Recruitment, Performance Management System, Public Universities

Submitted: 2024-12-04. Revised: 2024-12-11. Accepted: 2024-12-15

1 Introduction

Talent management and organizational ethics are critical constructs that shape the culture and operational effectiveness of institutions, (Arsawan, Koval, Rajiani, Rustiarini, Supartha, & Suryantini, 2022) particularly in the context of public universities. In an era where the competition for top talent and the demand for ethical organizational practices are intensifying, the intersection of these two domains warrants closer examination. Talent management encompasses strategic recruitment, professional development, employee retention, and performance management. On the other hand, Mohi Ud Din, and Zhang, (2023) propagated in a research that perceived organizational ethics refer to the moral principles and standards upheld within an organization, influencing employee behaviors and overall institutional integrity.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to investigate the relationship between talent management and that of perceived organizational ethics in Ghana's public universities.

Specifically, the research seeks to:

1. Evaluate the relationship between talent management and perceived organizational ethics in Ghana's public universities

1.2 Research Questions

What is the relationship between talent management and perceived organizational ethics in Ghana's public universities?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Talent Management

Talent management is defined in this research to mean an ongoing process that includes the attraction, motivation, development, and retention of high-quality employees as indicated by Mujtaba, Mubarik, and Soomro, (2022), and the authors emphasised the importance of a strategic and deliberate approach to managing the talent for the benefit of the organization.

Furthermore, talent management reaches far beyond traditional human relations practices as it adopts a proactive approach to identifying, cultivating and leveraging on the unique skills and capabilities of employees (Venkat, Khan, Gorkhe, Reddy, & Rao, 2023). It encompasses the holistic process of attracting, developing and retaining top performing individual who is essential to achieving organizational goals and maintaining a competitive edge in the organization. To buttress this, Mannila, (2023) a study, defines, and maximizing the potential of an organization's human capital talent management as a vital attribute of organizational effectiveness, involving a set of

practices and strategies that are aimed at attracting, developing, retaining. In essence, it focuses on the systematic identification, fostering, and application of talent within an organization to achieve strategic objectives as projected in a study, by Urme, (2023). Talent management also recognizes that human capital is the most valuable asset of any organization and aims to optimize its potential through targeted intervention and investments. At the heart of talent management lays the conceptual framework that seeks its implementation and also aligns it with the objectives of the organization, thus for the benefit of this study, the conceptualized framework component considered are talent development, talent retention and successional planning. Furthermore, O'Connor and Crowley-Henry (2019) propose that employees identified as talented within organizations often perceive greater alignment with talent management programs and exhibit heightened sensitivity to ethical concerns. Newman, Fast, and Harmon, (2020) in a study indicated that conversely, employees excluded from talent pools may perceive an absence of fairness, potentially undermining organizational justice. Hence, the relationship between distributive justice—fairness in resource allocation—and employee inclusion is moderated by procedural justice, reflecting the fairness of processes, and interactional justice, indicating the quality of interpersonal treatment during talent program implementations (Rød, & Wergeland, 2023). These findings underscore the complex interplay between talent management practices and ethical perceptions. So Kwon and Jang (2022) explored the nexus between talent management and ethics, emphasizing the importance of maintaining high ethical standards in managing talent pipelines. They identified challenges where talent programs fail to align the right individuals with appropriate roles, often jeopardizing organizational readiness. Similarly, Johara, Yahya, and Zainal, (2020), demonstrated that talent management practices positively influence the sustainable performance of academic staff, particularly when ethical standards are robust. These findings affirm the role of ethics as a moderating factor in the relationship between talent management and performance outcomes. Hence, perceived organizational ethics is the next variable to deliberate on.

2.1.1 Talent Management

Talent management is defined in this research to mean an ongoing process that includes the attraction, motivation, development, and retention of high-quality employees. The same definition was found in the study by El Dahshan and Youssef, (2018), but the authors emphasised the importance of a strategic and deliberate approach to managing the talent for the benefit of the organization.

Talent management reaches far beyond traditional human relations practices as it adopts a proactive approach to identifying, cultivating and leveraging on the unique skills and capabilities of employees. It encompasses the holistic process of attracting, developing and retaining top performing individual who is essential to achieving organizational goals and maintaining a competitive edge in the organization. To buttress this, Wright and McMahan, 2011 defines Talent management as a vital attribute of organizational effectiveness, involving a set of practices and strategies that are aimed at attract-

ing, developing, retaining, and maximising the potential of an organization's human capital. In essence, it focuses on the systematic identification, fostering, and application of talent within an organization to achieve strategic objectives as projected by Lewis and Heckman, 2006. Talent management also recognizes that human capital is the most valuable asset of any organization and aims to optimize its potential through targeted intervention and investments. At the heart of talent management lies the conceptual framework that seeks its implementation and also aligns it with the objectives of the organization, thus for the benefit of this study, the conceptualized framework component considered are talent development, talent retention and successional planning.

2.1.2 Talent development

This refers to the organizational processes and practices that are targeted at improving the skills, abilities, and knowledge of employees. This involves a combination of formal education, on-the-job training, and mentorship programs. This is intended for both their current job roles and future responsibilities. In recent years, talent development is seen to have played a very significant role in various aspects of organizational performance, employee engagement and retention. For instance, Gautam (2023) found talent management practices, including talent development to have a positive impact on employee performance in commercial banks in Nepal. The study also found that employee engagement has a mediating effect on the relationship between talent management practices and employee performance. As a result, Gautam (2023) stressed the importance of engaging employees in talent development initiatives. Talent management is a set of practices that are adopted in organizations and relate to how organizations do these things (Julius & Neequaye, 2020). The process of managing talent includes several different steps, one of which is talent development. It is conceivable for businesses to adopt a strategy that focusses on the acquisition of talent from the external labour market; nevertheless, the likelihood of such a strategy being successful over time is low (Eshun, 2020). Once talent is acquired, development is very essential, the organization must invest in development to enhance skills, capabilities and leadership potentials. This encompasses different learning and developmental initiatives which includes training programs, mentoring relationships, stretch assignments and career development opportunities. As a direct result of this, businesses are quite likely to make substantial expenditures in activities geared toward talent development. The goal of these investments is to equip talented people with the skills necessary to successfully implement corporate strategy (Boateng, 2020). Independently, (Zamzam, Samdin, Mahrani, Syaifuddin, Suleman, Masri, & Zaludin, 2023; Achmad, Noermijati, Rofiaty, & Irawanto, 2023), included talent management practises in their study and although Zamzam, Samdin, Mahrani, Syaifuddin, Suleman, Masri, & Zaludin, (2023) found a positive but not significant effect of talent development on organizational performance in a human resource management setting, Achmad, Noermijati, Rofiaty, & Irawanto, (2023), discovered that talent development had a positive and significant influence on intention to stay in the context of Generation

Z workers. However, the effectiveness of talent development initiatives depends on factors such as employee involvement, job satisfaction, and proactive behavior as propounded by Meyers, (2020).

2.1.3 Talent Retention

Talent retention involves policies and practices that organizations employ to prevent the loss of valued employees. This includes but not limited to competitive compensation, career development opportunities, and work-life balance initiatives. According to Hausknecht, (2017), effective talent retention is a critical component of organizational stability and competitiveness. As one of the major arms of talent management practices, talent retention plays a vital role and has been the focus of several recent studies. Furthermore, Sija, (2022), in a study indicated that the capacity of an organization to retain and maintain its workforce as long as its services continue to be in demand is directly correlated with the level of talent retention the organization has. Hence, retaining top talent is crucial for maintaining organizational continuity and preserving institutional knowledge according to Odipo, (2023). Also, this component focuses on creating an inclusive work environment where employees feel valued, engaged and motivated to stay. It also refers to the practice of considering and implementing a variety of retention strategies to increase the likelihood that an employee will remain with an organization for the longest possible period and will develop alongside the business while also being able to adapt to an ever-shifting external environment. According to Almomani, Sweis, and Obeidat, (2022), talent retention is a process that is done voluntarily by any organization to create an atmosphere that promotes and motivates individuals to stay with the entity for the largest amount of time possible. According to Amushila, and Bussin, (2021), the high cost associated with the loss of talented individuals has strengthened the need for businesses to develop and execute solutions that assist in the retention of personnel. Hitherto, finding a suitable successor is not only difficult and time-consuming, but also costly, according to Sethumurugan, Yin, and Sartori, (2021). On the other hand, Kurdi and Alshurideh, (2020) concluded that minimal staff turnover leads to great performance in an organization since key skill sets are kept. Also, Mannila, (2023) established that talent management practices, particularly those aligned with business strategy and overall business goals, have a statistically significant impact on corporate profits. Another study that focused on the direct influence of talent management strategies and entrepreneurial orientation on organizational performance of public universities in Jordan was Alleimoun, Othman, and Saadon, (2022), who found that talent management strategies and entrepreneurial orientation have statistically significant relationships. These studies highlight the importance of talent retention in talent management and its impact on organizational performance. They also underscored the role of such factors as entrepreneurial orientation, and organizational learning in promoting organizational performance.

2.1.4 Succession Planning

This is a systematic process of detecting and developing potential leaders within an organization to fill key critical positions in business in the future, as

noted by Siambi, (2022). It is an essential component of talent management that ensures the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the organization. In its most basic form, succession planning is a conscious decision made by an organization to foster and promote the continuous development of its employees, as well as to ensure that key positions maintain some measure of stability, which in turn enables the organization to achieve its business objectives as indicated by Bano, Omar, and Ismail, (2022). Historically, succession planning has often taken the form of a replacement strategy, with an emphasis placed mainly on executive-level roles. One or two potential successors may be discovered and chosen, most likely based on the feedback provided only by their current supervisor Bano, Omar, and Ismail, (2022). Hence, the process of succession planning has undergone a transformation and can now serve as a means to replenish an organization's human resources at either a broad or specific level. It involves identifying, assessing, and developing employee knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the organization's current and future staffing requirements. All these goals can be accomplished through succession planning. In the context of higher education institutes in Central India, a study by Shrivastava (2022) found succession planning to be a significant predictor of the effectiveness of the recruitment process. Whereas Yuswardi and Rosadah (2023) found succession planning practice have a negative impact on employee performance in the hotel industry. Monyei, Ukpere, Agbaeze, Omonona, Kelvin-Iloafu, and Obi-Anike, (2021), discovered succession planning to have become a basic need for small and medium enterprises to adopt to changes in the business environment. These studies highlight the importance of succession planning in various sectors and contexts, but they also suggest effective succession planning can depend on a variety of factors, including but not limited to the context in which they are applied, the specific practices implemented, and the other elements of talent management with which they are integrated. Planning for succession should be flexible and adaptable to accommodate varied needs and ensure the continuity of the firm since diverse resources, different organizational designs, and different mindsets all mean that different needs should be accommodated (Mahapatro, 2021).

2.2 Perceived Organizational Ethics

According to Mesfin, Woldie, Adamu, and Bekele, (2020), the concept of perceived organizational ethics is best described as the way workers view the moral standards and company culture. It includes their comprehension of the company's dedication to moral values, social responsibility, and ethical behaviour). The organizational framework and procedural requirements for acting morally are established by the existence of an ethical culture Sarwar, (2023). Furthermore, perceived organizational ethics were viewed as the ethical standard of the workplace as shown by the common values, customs, and ideologies that influence moral or immoral behaviour (Jha, & Singh, 2023). According to research, an organization's strong ethical framework has a favourable impact on its employees' ability to make ethical decisions (Roy, Newman, Round, & Bhattacharya, 2024). The set of rules and the application

of values that guide corporate dealings between management and employees are known as organizational ethics. These professional standards function as guidelines that support moral principles and non-economic social values in the workplace (ORLU, 2021). Furthermore the norms, beliefs, and guiding principles that determine behaviour inside a business or organization are referred to as organizational ethics. It includes a broad range of procedures and guidelines that control how a company runs, how it interacts with its staff, clients, and the public, as well as how it addresses moral and legal concerns as propounded in a study by Rosenbloom, Kravchuk, and Clerkin, (2022). This concept describes how staff members view the moral principles, corporate social responsibility, and ethical culture of a company. It has a significant impact on how each person makes ethical decisions. Therefore, ethics plays an important role in the determination of organizational effectiveness (Dawson, 2018). Hence, establishing a great working culture, improving decision-making, and encouraging ethical behaviour all depend on building a strong ethical framework within organizations ((Roy, Newman, Round, & Bhattacharya, 2024). Public universities, characterized by unique challenges such as limited resources and complex stakeholder environments, require talent strategies that integrate ethical considerations to enhance organizational effectiveness (Aithal, Prabhu, & Aithal, 2024).

2.2.1 Integrity

According to Zhaksylyk, Zimba, Yessirkepov, and Kocyigit, (2023) in their research, indicated that in an organization, upholding moral and ethical standards on a regular basis is referred to as having integrity. It includes being truthful, open, and acting morally even when it is not practical or advantageous. Stakeholders view organizations with high integrity as trustworthy because they exhibit consistency and dependability in their activities and judgements (Crane, B. 2020). Studies have indicated that the ethical atmosphere in an organization is significantly influenced by the perceived integrity of its leaders (Hamoudah, Othman, Abdul Rahman, Mohd Noor, & Alamoudi, 2021). Integrity in a leader has a good effect on how their subordinates behave. Anyone acting in the public interest must possess integrity. Employees must uphold the spirit, norm, and principles of auditing, such as independence, objectivity, professional conduct, and the preservation of the public interest, in order to be considered ethically honest and (Maile, (2022). In the context of an organizational, integrity refers to the observance of moral and ethical principles, ensuring consistency of actions, values, methods, and outcomes. As pointed out by Ciaco, (2023), integrity serves as the pillar for trust and credibility within the organization. Integrity is considered a critical factor in establishing an ethical organizational culture and is positively associated with various forms of organizational effectiveness.

2.2.2 Ethical Guidance

Numerous academics (Müller, 2023; Espedal, & Elter, 2023; Jones, 2023), have proposed that efforts to encourage positive, values-driven behaviour in employees may be directly impacted by the moral behaviour of leaders. Ethical guidance component of perceived organizational ethics suggests that it's possible that the implications of leaders' moral decisions and actions and how those actions influence staff members (Al Halbusi, Williams, Ramayah, Aldieri, & Vinci, 2021). In management, ethical guidance usually refers to the standards, values, and principles that direct behaviour and decision-making inside an organization, guaranteeing that deeds are morally upright, just, and consistent with society norms. This guidance may take into account a variety of ethical frameworks, including deontology, virtue ethics, and utilitarianism, as well as fairness, honesty, integrity, responsibility, and respect for the rights and interests of stakeholders. Good ethical leadership in management promotes sustainability, trust, and integrity in the company and in its interactions with stakeholders (Su, Lin, Wu, Zheng, Chen, & Jiang, 2021). Some benefits of ethical guidance identified in literature include customer satisfaction, long term sustainability and compliance with regulation and standards. Customer satisfaction and loyalty implies that businesses that operate morally are attracting more and more loyal customers (Briel, Goodpaster, & Naughton, (2021). Businesses that priorities ethical behaviour might draw in and keep clients that respect morality and social responsibility. According to Torelli, (2021), long-term sustainability takes into account how actions will affect different stakeholders, the environment, and society at large, while ethical behaviour helps organizations remain sustainable over the long run. The organization may become more resilient and long-lasting as a result of this sustainability focus. Hence, standards and regulation compliance implies that organizations can guarantee compliance with pertinent legislation by using ethical guidance, which frequently conforms to industry standards and legal requirements (Rane, Mallick, Kaya, & Rane, (2024).

2.2.3 Honour

Rhodes, (2023) posited in a study, that introduction lays the groundwork for a thorough examination of the many facets of honour in an organizational setting by examining the importance of perceived organizational ethics. Because of this, it serves as a foundational text for the subsequent conversations regarding the assessment and consequences of perceived organizational ethics, establishing a solid grasp of the topic. This refers to the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that one is indisposed to compromise in the context of an organizational setting. It exhibits in the form of fairness, honesty, and respect in all organizational transactions and relationships. A discovery in a study conducted by Shaikh, E., Brahmi, Thang, Watto, Trang, and Loan, (2022), indicated that honour is closely associated with an organization's reputation and is considered vital for the long-term sustainability and stakeholder relationships. By exploring the relationship between talent management and perceived organizational ethics, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of how these constructs

interact to shape institutional culture. The findings are expected to provide actionable insights for public university administrations in Ghana, guiding the design and implementation of ethical talent management practices that foster trust, integrity, and organizational effectiveness compete better because it makes wise decisions easier, according to numerous studies. Organizations can build their long-term strategic goals on the viewpoints, talents, and experience of a more diversified workforce (Chun, & Evans, 2023).

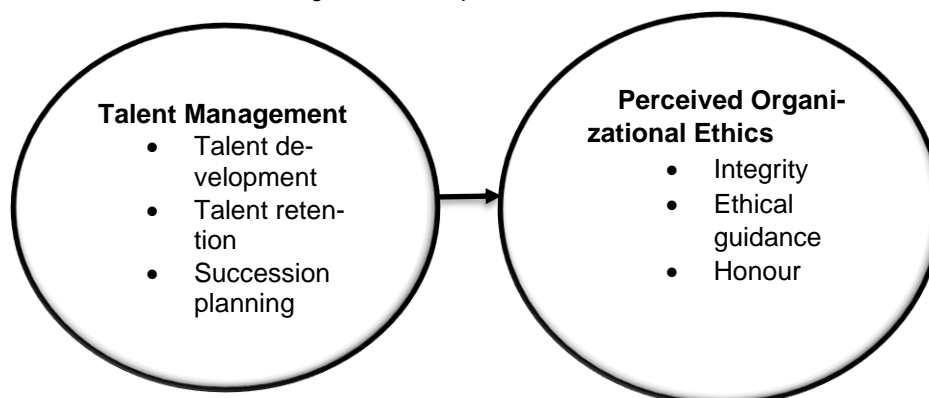
Based on the conceptual and empirical literature, the following is hypothesized:

H1: There is a significant relationship between Talent Management and Perceived Organizational Ethics.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Given the previous reviews, the following conceptual framework for the study was developed, as illustrated in Figure 1, showing the independent variable (talent management) and the dependent variable (perceived organizational ethics)

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



3 Research Methodology

The epistemological foundation of this study is rooted in a positivist perspective. According to Smith, (2021), epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired. This research adopted a positivist stance, emphasising empirical data and objective observations as the primary means of generating reliable and valid insights (Johnson & Brown, 2019). This choice aligns seamlessly with the overarching goal of the dissertation: to investigate the intricate relationships between talent management, corporate governance, organizational ethics, and employee engagement within the context of Public Universities in Ghana. The approach in this study hinges on the collection and analysis of data, a fundamental pillar of positivist philosophy (Hammersley & Gomm, 2020), to shed light on these critical di-

mensions of organizational dynamics. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), positivism relies on a deductive approach, where the researcher begins with a hypothesis or theory and seeks to test it using empirical data.

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

This study employed a mixed-method approach as indicated by Taherdoost, (2022), to explore the relationship between talent management practices and perceived organizational ethics in Ghana's public universities. This approach was selected to provide a comprehensive analysis, combining the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected to establish measurable relationships between the variables (Musheke, & Phiri, 2021), while qualitative insights provided deeper context and understanding (Islam, & Aldaihani, 2022) of the dynamics between talent management and organizational ethics. According to Mohajan, (2020), the quantitative aspect utilized a survey research design, which is effective for collecting essential information such as beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of respondents. The study variables were measured using structured questionnaires distributed to academic and administrative staff across Ghana's public universities. Respondents were required to meet a minimum educational qualification of an undergraduate degree to ensure the relevance and reliability of responses. Hence Paliwal, and Singh, (2021) propounded that, data collection involved a structured questionnaire designed to measure the core constructs of the study. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: demographic information, talent management practices, and perceived organizational ethics. Items measuring talent management practices focused on recruitment strategies, employee development initiatives, retention efforts, and performance management systems. Questions on perceived organizational ethics assessed transparency, accountability, fairness, and adherence to ethical standards within the institution. On the other hand, Naz, Gulab, and Aslam, (2022), indicated in a study that the qualitative component of the study involved semi-structured interviews with faculty members, administrative staff, and management representatives. These interviews were designed to complement the survey findings by providing in-depth perspectives on the ethical implications of talent management practices. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically, identifying patterns and insights that enriched the quantitative results (Naeem, Ozuem, Howell, & Ranfagni, 2023).

3.1.1 Sample Frame

The total estimated population for the study was 22,578, comprising all academic and administrative staff in public universities, as reported by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) in 2020. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select 15 universities across various geographical zones, ensuring fair representation. From these institutions, 370 staff members were randomly selected as respondents, representing diverse roles and perspectives within the universities.

3.1.2 Instrument Used

The instrumentation for this study was a structured questionnaire adapted designed to collect data relevant to the research objectives. Part 1 of the instrumentation focused on the demographic characteristics of the participants/respondents, including variables such as gender, age, level of education, period of employment (in years), the nature of the organization, and marital status of the respondents. According to Taherdoost, (2006), the demographic profile of respondents is crucial for understanding the background of the participants and providing a context for their responses. The following paragraphs describe the composition of the questionnaire according to the objectives of the study. Part two delved into key indicators of the study area, including subsections on talent management, and perceived organizational ethics. Each of these sections were adapted from various authors as referenced therein and contains a series of statements related to the topic that respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement or otherwise on a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Following the research recommendations of Geuens and Pelsmacker (2017) in the study, the likert-type scale approach is a common method for measuring attitudes and perceptions.

Perception of Organizational Ethics: The POE section of the questionnaire consisted of items related to integrity, ethical guidance, and honour. This section of the questionnaire was adapted from the works of Mishra (1996); Brown, White & Barlow (2005); Yukl, (2013).

Talent Management: This section of the questionnaire included items on talent development, succession planning, and talent retention. The aim of this key indicator was to assess the direct and indirect effects that talent management has on employee engagement. This was crucial to addressing the research objective four of the study. The questionnaire items for talent management section were adapted from El Dahshan, and Youssef (2018).

4 Results

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the relationship between talent management practices and perceived organizational ethics within Ghana's public universities. By examining the demographic composition of respondents, perceptions of talent management practices, and the ethical climate, this study offers a nuanced understanding of how these variables interact to shape organizational culture. Quantitative analysis, supported by figures and tables, highlights key trends and relationships, while the discussion integrates theoretical perspectives to contextualize the results. The demographic data revealed that the majority of respondents (82.16%) were male, while 17.84% were female, reflecting a male-dominant workforce in Ghana's public universities. This gender imbalance suggests the need for policies promoting diversity and inclusivity. Age distribution showed that most respondents were within the 30–50 age range, highlighting the prevalence of mid-career professionals in these institutions. Educational qualifications indicated that all participants met the minimum criterion

of holding an undergraduate degree, with a significant proportion holding advanced degrees, underscoring the high academic qualifications characteristic of the university workforce. Respondents' perceptions of talent management practices were measured across several variables, capturing aspects such as recruitment, development, retention, and performance management. Table 1 summarizes the results, highlighting the levels of agreement and disagreement for each variable.

Variable	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Mean ± SD
The organization is attracting and recruiting key people	20.54	23.78	55.68	3.508 ±
The organization is growing/developing future leaders	7.30	24.86	67.84	3.8085 ±
The organization identifies training needs objectively	21.62	28.38	44.87	3.5105 ±
The organization allocates a budget for training	22.71	30.27	47.03	3.3108 ±
The organization provides learning and development programs	27.57	17.03	55.41	3.4105 ±
The organization retains key employees	4.59	32.70	62.70	3.8081 ±
Work matches employees' abilities and skills	8.38	12.70	78.92	3.9080 ±
The benefits at the organization are competitive	5.41	25.14	69.46	3.7090 ±

Table 1: Perceptions of Talent Management Practices (N = 370)

From the results, it is evident that respondents generally agree that their organizations are effective in retaining key employees (62.70%) and aligning work with employees' skills and abilities (78.92%). These findings align with Edwards' (1991) job-matching theory as cited in the study by Ma, and Ji, (2020), which emphasizes the importance of aligning job demands with employee competencies to enhance satisfaction and performance as cited by Shi, Wang, and Wei, (2023) in a study conducted. However, areas such as allocating budgets for training (47.03%) and objectively identifying training needs (44.87%) received lower agreement levels, signaling the need for

targeted improvements in these aspects of talent management Perceptions of organizational ethics were similarly analyzed, with Table 2 providing a detailed summary of responses. Respondents generally expressed positive perceptions of ethical practices, particularly in areas such as ethical communication (70.54%), connection to the organization (70.81%), and accountability for ethical practices (60.27%). However, there were notable gaps in recognizing ethical contributions (35.41%) and consistency in discussing business ethics (54.32%), suggesting areas for institutional improvement.

Variable	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Mean ± SD
My manager communicates an ethical vision	9.46	20.00	70.54	3.8 ± 0.85
My manager recognizes ethical contributions	31.89	32.70	35.41	3.1 ± 0.99
My manager follows through on promises	12.43	35.41	52.17	3.5 ± 0.79
I feel connected to my organization	6.49	22.70	70.81	3.7 ± 0.69
My manager holds employees accountable	13.24	26.49	60.27	3.5 ± 0.81

Table 2: Perceptions of Organizational Ethics (N = 370)

The relationship between talent management practices and perceived organizational ethics was further explored using Pearson's correlation analysis, as shown in Table 3. The results revealed a positive and statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.160$, $p < 0.01$) between these constructs, indicating that improvements in talent management are associated with enhanced perceptions of organizational ethics.

Variable	Talent Management	Perceived Organizational Ethics
Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.160**
Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0.002

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

The positive correlation suggests that robust talent management practices foster an ethical organizational climate characterized by transparency, fairness, and accountability. This finding aligns with Kwon and Jang's (2022) emphasis on the ethical implications of effective talent management, as well as Contini, Peruzzini, Bulgarelli, and Bosi, (2023) in their observation that ethical standards enhance the sustainable performance of academic staff.

5 Discussion

The discussion of these findings integrates theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence. The alignment between work and employee abilities (TAM7) echoes the job demands-resources model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), which posits that matching resources to demands reduces burnout and enhances engagement. Similarly, the gap in recognizing ethical contributions reflects Herzberg's (1959) motivation-hygiene theory cited in the work of Peramatzis, and Galanakis, (2022), where intrinsic motivators, such as recognition, play a critical role in job satisfaction. While the study identified strengths in talent management practices, such as retention and job alignment, the gaps in areas like ethical recognition and training allocation highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach to integrating ethics into talent management. O'Connor and Crowley-Henry's (2019) findings on the interplay between distributive and procedural justice further reinforce the importance of fairness in talent management processes. Institutions must adopt hybrid approaches, as suggested by Kravariti, Johnston, and Klein, (2023), to address these challenges and enhance organizational ethics. Overall, the results emphasize the interconnectedness of talent management and organizational ethics. Institutions with well-integrated practices not only attract and retain top talent but also cultivate ethical cultures that inspire trust, loyalty, and engagement. By addressing the identified gaps, Ghana's Public Universities can strengthen their institutional integrity and align talent management with broader ethical goals.

6 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated a significant positive relationship between talent management practices and perceived organizational ethics in Ghana's

public universities. Universities that implemented robust and inclusive talent management systems reported higher levels of perceived organizational ethics, characterized by transparency, fairness, and accountability. Conversely, weaknesses in areas such as recognizing ethical contributions and allocating budgets for training were associated with reduced perceptions of ethical practices.

6.1 Implications of the Findings

This study's findings offer valuable implications for government, heads of the public universities in Ghana, and academics.

6.1.1 Implication to Government

Government should adopt talent management strategies through perceived organizational ethics that would help improve the employee inclusiveness levels in the public university in Ghana. Furthermore, the government should drive all stakeholders' participation especially employees to help boost the employee inclusion levels observed in the sector.

6.1.2 Implication to Heads of the Public Universities in Ghana

The heads of public universities in Ghana should be intentional in maintaining a high level of perceived organizational ethics so as to drive higher levels of employee inclusion. Employees, desire and readiness to trust, commit and be motivated can be sustained based on the way their talents are being harnessed and utilized. Heads, of public universities should be open to involving employees in decision making and strategic planning.

6.1.3 Implication for Academics

This study forms a spring board for further studies on the effect of talent management, and perceived organizational ethics. This study therefore adds to the body of knowledge on the linkage between these important variables available to researchers for further consideration.

6.2 Contributions to Knowledge

6.2.1 Conceptual Contribution

This study provides a significant conceptual contribution by highlighting the multifaceted nature of employee engagement, talent management, and perceived organizational ethics. The conceptual framework presented in this study filled the gap in knowledge of the mediating effect of perceived organizational ethics and talent management.

The study introduces a new conceptual framework that links talent management and perceived organizational ethics to human resource management.

6.2.2 Theoretical Contribution

This study looked at the relationship between talent management and perceived organizational ethics in public universities in Ghana. The association between talent management tactics and perceived organizational ethics

success extends beyond what has previously been proven. The findings improve talent management and perceived organizational ethics of public universities in Ghana. Second, the findings aid in illuminating how the relationship between talent management strategies and perceived organizational ethics.

6.2.3 Empirical Contribution

This study adds to the existing empirical works on the mediating effect of the relationship between talent management and perceived organizational ethics in the public universities of Ghana. The positive relationship between talent management and perceived organizational ethics was established in this study. It presents a case study of public universities in Ghana, providing real-world insight into the challenges and opportunities associated with these practices.

6.3 Recommendation

The study makes the following recommendations based on the findings of the study:

- i. Public universities in Ghana should adopt talent management practices that are tailored to their specific needs as a way of boosting employee engagement.
- ii. As a result of the positive and significant relationship between talent management and perceived organizational ethics, the government should adopt talent retention, talent development and succession planning practices that will support perceived organizational ethics.
- iii. Honour, ethical guidance, and integrity should be well driven within the universities to improve the levels of employee engagement through perceived organizational ethics.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the public universities in Ghana, therefore, the generalizability of the findings may be limited to the Public Universities especially in Ghana. However, since that was the objective of the study, this limitation did not affect the study's objectives as they were fully met. This study collected data at a point in time, limiting the ability to establish cause over a period of time. However, this was well within the goal of the study, hence, the studies aim was established. Without longitudinal data, it is challenging to ascertain trends, causality, and the sustainability of the benefits associated with talent management and perceived organizational ethics. Therefore, conducting longitudinal studies would allow researchers to track changes over time and offer deeper insights into how these strategies contribute to long-term levels of talent management. However, since the goals of this study was to obtain data at a point in time this objective was achieved.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Further studies could extend this study to other countries and other research context apart from the public universities in Ghana as used for this study. Further studies may also adopt other measures of the talent management, and perceived organizational ethics, to further broaden the scope of their findings. Also, future studies should consider panel studies to examine the long-term impact of these practices on organizational performances since the current study only conducted a cross-sectional survey.

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