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Original article

Employer obligations and employee engagement in Kakumiro District Local Government, Uganda. A cross-sectional study.

Mary Murungi*, Dr. Doreen Akunda, Edmand Bakashaba

School of Graduate Studies, Team University

Abstract

Background

Historically, the idea of the psychological contract emerged from early thinking about informal and unwritten expectations within employment relationships. This study examined the relationship between employer obligations and employee engagement in Kakumiro District Local Government, Uganda.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional correlational design with a mixed-methods approach. From a population of 170, a sample of 118 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table and raised to 121. The Chief Administrative Officer and Human Resource Manager were included by census, the ten District Service Commission members were included purposively (census), and 109 employees of the Finance and Administration departments were selected by simple random sampling.

Results

Employer obligations were moderately met, with an overall mean of 3.23 (SD = 0.75). The highest-rated items were the provision of resources necessary to perform duties (mean = 3.32; 45.4% agreeing), timely communication of employment-related information (mean = 3.31; 40.7%), training and professional development opportunities (mean = 3.30; 46.3%) and support when employees face challenges (mean = 3.30; 41.7%). Opportunities for career advancement had the highest level of agreement (47.2%) but also the highest level of disagreement (30.6%), which shows that employees' experiences of career progression were divided. there was no statistically significant relationship between employer obligations and employee engagement ($r = 0.026$, $p = 0.787$, $n = 108$). Most employees were aged 30–39 years (37.0%) and 40–49 years (31.5%), while 15.7% were aged 20–29 years and 15.7% were 50 years and above.

Conclusion

Employer obligations were met to a moderate extent: salaries and statutory obligations were largely met, but working conditions, fair treatment, welfare and training were the weakest areas.

Recommendation

Management should ensure fair and transparent treatment of all employees, particularly in the allocation of opportunities, workload and promotion.

Keywords: *Psychological contracts, Employees' perceptions, Employee engagement, Kakumiro District Local Government, Uganda.*
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Corresponding authors: *Mary Murungi*
Email: murungimary@gmail.com
School of Graduate Studies, Team University

Background

Historically, the idea of the psychological contract emerged from early thinking about informal and unwritten expectations within employment relationships. Argyris (1960) introduced the idea of an implicit understanding between employees and organisations, particularly concerning expectations about work and organisational treatment. Later, Rousseau (1989) developed the concept more explicitly by defining psychological contracts as employees' individual beliefs about the reciprocal obligations between themselves and their organisations. Rousseau (1990) further differentiated psychological contracts into transactional and relational obligations, demonstrating that employees may expect tangible returns such as pay and career advancement as well as relational outcomes such as job security and loyalty. These developments shifted attention from formal employment contracts to the subjective expectations that employees hold about what their organisations owe them and what they owe in return (Argyris, 1960; Rousseau, 1989).

During the 1990s, employee engagement began to develop as a distinct area of organisational and human resource research. Kahn (1990) conceptualised personal engagement as the extent to which individuals bring their physical, cognitive and emotional selves into the performance of their work roles, and emphasised meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability as conditions for engagement. Maslach and Leiter (1997) subsequently approached engagement from the perspective of burnout, associating it with energy, involvement and effectiveness, while Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá and Bakker (2002) conceptualised work engagement as a positive state characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption. Over the 1990s and early 2000s, the understanding of employee engagement therefore evolved from a broad psychological involvement in work to a measurable positive work-

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related state (Kahn, 1990; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Recent scholarship on employee engagement in Africa indicated that the concept had developed through diverse studies across African organisational contexts, while emphasising the need for culturally sensitive approaches to engagement (Shokunbi, 2025).

In East Africa, employee engagement became increasingly relevant as governments pursued public-sector reforms, decentralisation, improved service delivery and performance-oriented public administration. Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda increasingly emphasised employee performance, accountability, organisational effectiveness and citizen-oriented service delivery (Kasekende, Munene, Ntayi & Ahiauzu, 2015). These reforms created greater interest in the psychological and relational dimensions of public employment, because formal employment arrangements alone may not explain why some public employees demonstrate high levels of commitment and discretionary effort while others show limited involvement (Saks, 2006; Kasekende, 2017). Public servants expect fair treatment, supportive leadership, career development, adequate working conditions, recognition, timely remuneration and opportunities for professional development, while governments expect employees to demonstrate commitment, accountability, responsiveness and effective service delivery. This reciprocal relationship reflects the basic logic of the psychological contract: where expectations are perceived to be fulfilled, employees may be more willing to invest emotional, cognitive and physical resources in their work (Rousseau, 1989, 1990; Kahn, 1990).

In Uganda, research on psychological contracts and employee engagement became more visible during the 2010s, particularly within the public service. Kasekende et al. (2015) examined psychological contracts in Uganda's public service and found that organisational climate and social exchange processes were relevant to the employee–employer relationship. Kasekende (2017) examined the psychological contract, employee engagement and discretionary behaviours among employees of Uganda's public service commissions and agencies, and found that employer obligations, employee obligations and the state of the psychological contract were positively associated with discretionary behaviours, while employee engagement partially mediated these relationships. This study examined the relationship between employer obligations and employee engagement in Kakumiro District Local Government, Uganda.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a correlational research design with a mixed-methods approach. The correlational design enabled the study to establish the relationship between psychological contracts and employee engagement without manipulating the study variables. The mixed-methods approach involved collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a broader understanding of the problem: quantitative data were collected using questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews and documentary review, which allowed the findings to be triangulated (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Study Population

The study population comprised the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), the Human Resource Manager, the members of the District Service Commission (DSC), and the employees of two departments of Kakumiro District Local Government, the Finance Department and the Administration Department. According to the records of the Kakumiro District Human Resource Department (2025), the study population was 170. The Finance Department, headed by the Chief Finance Officer, is responsible for the district's budgeting, accounting, revenue mobilisation, expenditure control, payroll management and financial reporting. Its 28 employees include the Chief Finance Officer, senior accountants, accountants, accounts assistants and revenue officers at the district headquarters and in the sub-counties. The Administration Department, headed by the Chief Administrative Officer, is responsible for the coordination of district activities, human resource management, records management, information and communication, and the administration of lower local governments. Its 130 employees include human resource, records and information officers at the district headquarters, and sub-county chiefs and parish chiefs at lower local government level.

The two departments were selected because they are the departments through which the district fulfils or fails to fulfil its obligations to employees. The Administration Department, through the human resource function, handles recruitment, deployment, appraisal, training, promotion and staff welfare, while the Finance Department handles salaries, allowances and other payments. Their employees therefore experience, and were well placed to assess, employer obligations, employee obligations and contract fulfilment.

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Table 1: Target Population, Sample Size, Sampling Techniques and Methods of Data Collection

Category of respondents	Population (N)	Sample size (n)	Sampling technique	Method of data collection
Chief Administrative Officer	1	1	Census	Interview
Human Resource Manager	1	1	Census	Interview
District Service Commission members	10	10	Purposive sampling (Census)	Interview
Employees of the Finance Department	28	19	Simple random sampling	Questionnaire
Employees of the Administration Department	130	90	Simple random sampling	Questionnaire
Total	**170**	**121**		

Source: *Kakumiro District Human Resource Department (2025); Krejcie and Morgan (1970).*

Sample Size

The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table (Appendix V), which gives a sample of 118 for a population of 170. Because the District Service Commission is small, all ten of its members were included, which raised the sample to 121. The sample comprised the Chief Administrative Officer (1), the Human Resource Manager (1), District Service Commission members (10), employees of the Finance Department (19) and employees of the Administration Department (90). The sample of employees was shared between the two departments in proportion to their size, using the formula $n_i = (N_i \div N) \times n$.

Sampling Techniques

Census

Census was used for the Chief Administrative Officer and the Human Resource Manager because each category had only one person, and both were included in the study.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to identify the ten District Service Commission members, including the Chairperson, because they possess specific knowledge and experience of recruitment, confirmation, promotion and discipline of district staff. Because the Commission is small, all ten members were included (census).

Simple Random Sampling

Simple random sampling was used to select respondents from the employees of the Finance and Administration departments, so that each employee had an equal chance of being selected. The staff lists of the two departments were used as sampling frames, and respondents were selected by the lottery method. This technique reduced selection bias and ensured that the selected respondents represented the employees of the two departments.

Methods of Data Collection

The study employed three methods of data collection, namely a questionnaire survey, interviews and documentary review, which provided both quantitative and qualitative information and allowed triangulation of the findings.

Questionnaire Method

A structured questionnaire was administered to the 109 sampled employees of the Finance and Administration departments. The questionnaire used closed-ended questions on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), covering employer obligations, employee obligations, contract fulfilment and employee engagement. The method facilitated the collection of standardised data that could be analysed statistically to establish relationships between the study variables.

Interview Method

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Chief Administrative Officer, the Human Resource Manager and the District Service Commission members. The interviews explored employer and employee obligations, contract fulfilment, employee engagement and the challenges affecting them, and provided detailed information that could not be captured through questionnaires.

Documentary Review Method

The study reviewed relevant human resource records, including staff establishment records, recruitment and appointment records, appointment letters, human resource policies, welfare and training records, payroll records, appraisal and attendance records, disciplinary and promotion records, grievance records, staff meeting minutes, engagement or satisfaction reports and district performance reports. The documentary review provided supporting evidence and enabled triangulation of the questionnaire and interview data.

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Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaire

The structured questionnaire was used

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from the CAO, the Human Resource Manager and the DSC members.

Documentary Review Checklist

A documentary review checklist listing 15 categories of records was used to record whether each record was available and what it showed, so that relevant information was extracted systematically.

Data Collection Procedures

The study obtained an introductory letter from Team University and an acceptance letter from Kakumiro District Local Government before data collection. The selected respondents were then contacted and informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality and voluntary participation. Questionnaires were distributed to the selected employees and collected after completion. Interviews were held with the CAO, the Human Resource Manager and the DSC members at agreed times, and human resource records were reviewed using the documentary review checklist. All completed instruments were checked for completeness, and the data were stored securely for analysis.

Validity of Instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Validity was ensured through expert review, the Content Validity Index (CVI) and pilot testing. The instruments were developed from the study objectives, conceptual framework and reviewed literature, and were reviewed by the supervisor and human resource management experts for relevance, clarity and comprehensiveness. The CVI (0.90) was calculated by dividing the number of items rated relevant by the total number of items assessed, with a value of 0.70 or above considered acceptable (Polit & Beck, 2021). The instruments were also pilot-tested among respondents in a similar setting who did not take part in the main study, and ambiguous items were corrected before data collection.

Reliability of Instruments

Reliability refers to the consistency of a research instrument in producing stable results under similar conditions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The questionnaire was pilot-tested among respondents from a similar local government who were not included in the final sample, and Cronbach's alpha was then computed for each section using the responses of the 108 employees who took part. A coefficient of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable (Taber, 2018; Sekaran & Bougie, 2024).

Table 2: Reliability of the Questionnaire (Cronbach's Alpha)

Section / sub-scale	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha	Remark
B: Employer obligations	11	0.874	Reliable
Vigour (E1–E4)	4	0.699	Acceptable (at threshold)
Dedication (E5–E8)	4	0.701	Reliable
Absorption (E9–E12)	4	0.745	Reliable

***Source**: Primary data (2026); n = 108.*

Table 2 shows that all four main sections of the questionnaire had alpha values between 0.851 and 0.879, which indicates good internal consistency. Of the three engagement sub-scales, each with only four items, absorption had an alpha of 0.745, dedication 0.701 and vigour 0.699, which is at the threshold. The questionnaire was therefore considered reliable. The reliability of the interview guide and documentary review checklist was enhanced through standardised instruments, consistent data collection procedures and accurate recording of information.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires was coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 26). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, were used to summarise respondents' characteristics and the study variables, and mean scores were interpreted using the scale in Table 3.3.

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Table 3: Interpretation of Mean Scores

Mean range	Response mode	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly agree	Very high
3.41 – 4.20	Agree	High
2.61 – 3.40	Not sure	Moderate
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree	Low
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly disagree	Very low

Source: Adapted from the five-point Likert scale (class width = 4 ÷ 5 = 0.80).

Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to establish the relationships between employer obligations, employee obligations, contract fulfilment and employee engagement, including its three dimensions. Multiple linear regression was also used to establish the combined relationship of the three dimensions of psychological contracts with employee engagement. Statistical significance was tested at the 0.05 level.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews were analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Responses were transcribed, coded and organised into themes based on the study objectives, and were presented narratively with illustrative quotations to complement the quantitative results. Documentary findings were summarised in a table and compared with the questionnaire and interview findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed key ethical principles throughout the research process. Informed consent: respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, its procedures and their rights before voluntarily consenting to participate. Voluntary participation: participation was voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity: questionnaires did not carry names, interviewees were identified by codes (I1 to I7), and information was used strictly for academic purposes. Permission: an introductory letter was obtained from Team University and permission from Kakumiro District Local Government before data collection. Objectivity and integrity: data were collected, analysed and reported honestly, including findings that did not support the expected relationships. Protection of participants: respondents were not exposed to harm, discrimination or professional risk. Academic integrity: all sources were acknowledged using the APA 7th edition referencing style.

Results

Response Rate

The study targeted a sample of 121 respondents.

Table 4: Response Rate

Category of respondents	Instrument	Sample (n)	Responded	Response rate (%)
Chief Administrative Officer	Interview guide	1	1	100.0
Human Resource Manager	Interview guide	1	1	100.0
District Service Commission members	Interview guide	10	5	50.0
Employees of the Finance Department	Questionnaire	19	18	94.7
Employees of the Administration Department	Questionnaire	90	90	100.0
Total		**121**	**115**	**95.0**

Source: *Primary data (2026).*

Table 4 shows that 108 of the 109 sampled employees returned completed questionnaires: all 90 employees of the Administration Department and 18 of the 19 employees of the Finance Department. The Chief Administrative Officer, the Human Resource Manager and five of the ten District Service Commission members, including the Chairperson, were interviewed. Overall, 115 of the 121 sampled respondents took part, a response rate of 95.0%. The response rate among the Commission members was 50.0%, but the Chairperson was among those interviewed and the interview findings were supported by the documentary review. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 70% and above is very good for analysis and reporting; the

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response rate was therefore adequate for drawing conclusions about the two departments.

Background Characteristics of Respondents

Table 5: Background Characteristics of Questionnaire Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	56	51.9
	Female	52	48.1
Age (years)	20–29	17	15.7
	30–39	40	37.0
	40–49	34	31.5
	50 and above	17	15.7
Highest education	Certificate	7	6.5
	Diploma	22	20.4
	Bachelor's degree	57	52.8
	Master's degree	16	14.8
	Other	6	5.6
Department	Finance	18	16.7
	Administration	90	83.3
Length of service	Less than 1 year	16	14.8
	1–5 years	38	35.2
	6–10 years	31	28.7
	11–15 years	15	13.9
	Above 15 years	8	7.4
Employment category	Permanent	65	60.2
	Contract	38	35.2
	Other	5	4.6

Source: *Primary data (2026); n = 108 for each variable.*

Table 5 shows that 51.9% of the employees were male and 48.1% were female, a near-balanced gender distribution. Most employees were aged 30–39 years (37.0%) and 40–49 years (31.5%), while 15.7% were aged 20–29 years and 15.7% were 50 years and above. More than half (52.8%) held a bachelor's degree, 20.4% a diploma, 14.8% a master's degree and 6.5% a certificate, which shows that the respondents were sufficiently educated to understand and respond to the questionnaire.

The Administration Department accounted for 83.3% of the respondents and the Finance Department for 16.7%, in line with the sizes of the two departments. On length of service, 35.2% had served for 1–5 years, 28.7% for 6–10 years, 13.9% for 11–15 years and 7.4% for more than 15 years, while 14.8% had served for less than one year. Thus 85.2% had served for at least a year and had experienced the employment relationship long enough to form views about the district's obligations. Most employees (60.2%) were on permanent terms, while 35.2% were on contract, which means that the sample included employees with different levels of job security.

Profile of Interviewees

Table 6: Profile of Interviewees

Code	Position	Years in position/district
I1	Chief Administrative Officer	6
I2	Human Resource Manager	4
I3	Chairperson, District Service Commission	8
I4	Member, District Service Commission	3
I5	Member, District Service Commission	5
I6	Member, District Service Commission	2
I7	Member, District Service Commission	6

Source*: Primary data (2026).*

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Table 6 shows that the interviewees were the Chief Administrative Officer, the Human Resource Manager, the Chairperson of the District Service Commission and four other members of the Commission. They had served in their positions for between two and eight years (an average of 4.9 years) and were responsible for managing staff, recruitment, confirmation, promotion and discipline, which made them well placed to explain the employment relationship in the district.

Employee Engagement in Kakumiro District Local Government

Employee engagement, the dependent variable, was measured through twelve questionnaire items covering vigour, dedication and absorption, and was explored through interviews and records.

Questionnaire Findings on Employee Engagement

Table 7: Employees' Responses on Employee Engagement

Source: *Primary data (2026); n = 108. SA = strongly agree, A = agree, NS = not sure, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree.*

Code	Statement	SA f (%)	A f (%)	NS f (%)	D f (%)	SD f (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interp.
E1	I feel energetic when performing my duties at Kakumiro District Local Government.	17 (15.7)	27 (25.0)	37 (34.3)	21 (19.4)	6 (5.6)	3.26	1.11	Moderate
E2	I am willing to put effort into my work even when tasks are demanding.	18 (16.7)	34 (31.5)	30 (27.8)	16 (14.8)	10 (9.3)	3.31	1.19	Moderate
E3	I feel mentally strong while carrying out my responsibilities.	17 (15.7)	29 (26.9)	40 (37.0)	16 (14.8)	6 (5.6)	3.32	1.08	Moderate
E4	I remain enthusiastic about my work even when I face challenges.	15 (13.9)	31 (28.7)	40 (37.0)	17 (15.7)	5 (4.6)	3.31	1.05	Moderate
E5	I am enthusiastic about the work I perform in the district.	14 (13.0)	38 (35.2)	27 (25.0)	24 (22.2)	5 (4.6)	3.30	1.10	Moderate
E6	I feel proud of the work I do for Kakumiro District Local Government.	15 (13.9)	32 (29.6)	40 (37.0)	15 (13.9)	6 (5.6)	3.32	1.06	Moderate
E7	I consider my work meaningful and important to the district community.	11 (10.2)	32 (29.6)	40 (37.0)	18 (16.7)	7 (6.5)	3.20	1.05	Moderate
E8	I am committed to achieving the objectives of Kakumiro District Local Government.	21 (19.4)	29 (26.9)	32 (29.6)	21 (19.4)	5 (4.6)	3.37	1.14	Moderate
E9	I become fully involved in the tasks I perform at work.	20 (18.5)	31 (28.7)	32 (29.6)	20 (18.5)	5 (4.6)	3.38	1.13	Moderate
E10	I become deeply focused when performing my work responsibilities.	20 (18.5)	21 (19.4)	38 (35.2)	18 (16.7)	11 (10.2)	3.19	1.22	Moderate
E11	I find it difficult to stop working when I am deeply involved in an important task.	17 (15.7)	30 (27.8)	39 (36.1)	15 (13.9)	7 (6.5)	3.32	1.10	Moderate
E12	Time passes quickly when I am engaged in my work.	17 (15.7)	28 (25.9)	40 (37.0)	17 (15.7)	6 (5.6)	3.31	1.09	Moderate
	Overall mean						**3.30**	**0.73**	**Moderate**

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Table 8: Summary of Employee Engagement by Dimension

Dimension	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Vigour	E1–E4	3.30	0.80	Moderate
Dedication	E5–E8	3.30	0.79	Moderate
Absorption	E9–E12	3.30	0.85	Moderate
Overall engagement	**E1–E12**	**3.30**	**0.73**	**Moderate**

***Source**: Primary data (2026); n = 108.*

Eemployee engagement was moderate, with an overall mean of 3.30 (SD = 0.73), and that the three dimensions were at almost exactly the same level: vigour (mean = 3.30), dedication (mean = 3.30) and absorption (mean = 3.30). On every item, between 38.0% and 48.1% of the employees agreed, between 19.4% and 26.9% disagreed, and about a third were not sure.

Under vigour, 48.1% of the employees agreed that they were willing to put effort into their work even when tasks were demanding (mean = 3.31), but only 40.7% agreed that they felt energetic when performing their duties (mean = 3.26). Under dedication, the highest-rated items were commitment to achieving the district's objectives (mean = 3.37; 46.3% agreeing) and enthusiasm about their work (mean = 3.30; 48.1%), while the lowest was considering their work meaningful and important to the community (mean = 3.20; only 39.8% agreeing). Under absorption, 47.2% agreed that they became fully involved in their tasks (mean = 3.38), the highest-rated engagement item, but only 38.0% agreed that they became deeply focused when performing their work (mean = 3.19), the lowest-rated item, with 26.9% disagreeing.

These levels are below what would be expected of a fully engaged workforce: fewer than half of the employees agreed with any engagement statement. They are broadly consistent with the district's records cited in the statement of the problem, which indicated that only 52%–58% of employees consistently demonstrated vigour, dedication and absorption (Kakumiro District Human Resource Department, 2025).

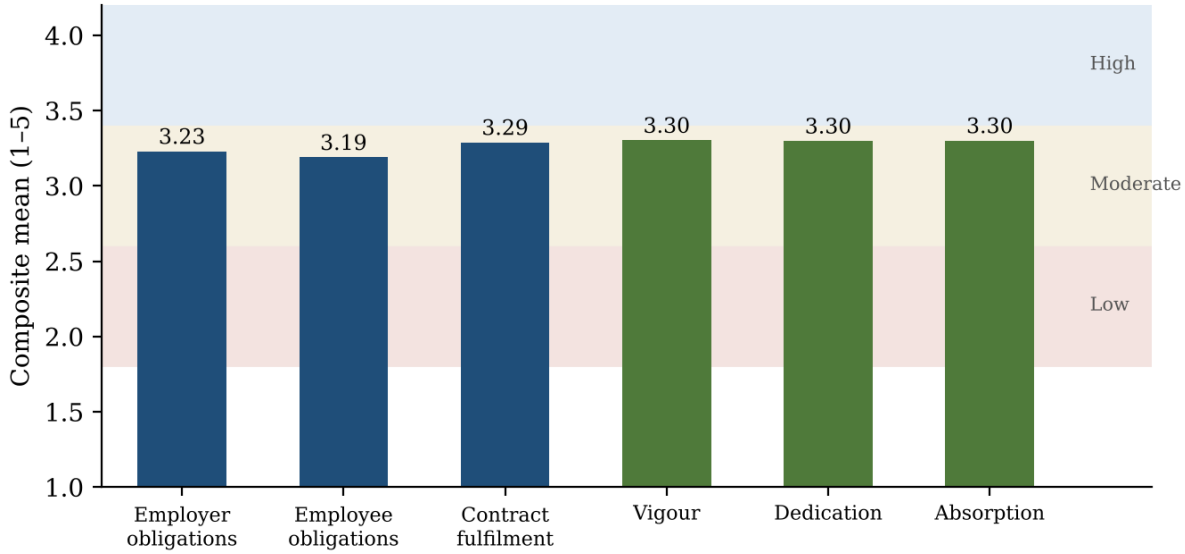

Figure 1: Composite mean scores of psychological contract dimensions and engagement dimensions
Source: Primary data (2026).

Figure 1 shows that all six composite scores, for the three psychological contract dimensions and the three engagement dimensions, fell within the moderate band, between 3.19 and 3.30.

Table 9: Employee Engagement by Length of Service

Length of service	**N**	**Mean engagement**	**Std. Dev.**
Less than 1 year	16	3.06	0.51
1–5 years	38	3.21	0.79
6–10 years	31	3.30	0.78
11–15 years	15	3.67	0.63
Above 15 years	8	3.53	0.57
All employees	**108**	**3.30**	**0.73**

***Source:** Primary data (2026). One-way ANOVA: F(4, 103) = 1.78, p = 0.139.*

Table 4.6 shows that engagement tended to be higher among longer-serving employees: employees with 11–15 years of service had the highest mean (3.67) and those with more than 15 years had a mean of 3.53, while those

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with less than one year had the lowest (3.06). How ever, the differences between the service groups were not statistically significant ($F(4, 103) = 1.78$, $p = 0.139$). Engagement was also similar between permanent (mean = 3.34) and contract employees (mean = 3.25) and between female (3.33) and male employees (3.27).

Interview Findings on Employee Engagement

Thematic analysis of the interviews produced two themes on employee engagement: the level of engagement and the challenges affecting it.

Theme 1: Level of employee engagement

The interviewees described engagement as moderate and uneven across departments and supervisors. The CAO described it as "Mixed. Some departments are highly motivated while others need a push" (I1), while the Human Resource Manager said: "Moderate. I would not call it high or low" (I2). A DSC member observed that "some staff are very dedicated while others are only going through the motions" (I4), and the DSC Chairperson noted that engagement was "fairly good among long-serving staff and weaker among the newly recruited" (I3), which agrees with the pattern in Table 4.6.

Theme 2: Challenges affecting employee engagement

The interviewees identified heavy workload in understaffed sections, limited facilities, staff spread across several duty stations, limited recognition, uncertainty about promotion, poor communication and weak feedback as the main challenges affecting engagement. As the CAO explained, the challenges were "heavy workload in understaffed sections, limited facilities and staff spread across several duty stations" (I1).

Documentary Review Findings

The findings of the documentary review are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 10: Documentary Review Findings

No.	Document/record	Available	Finding
1	Staff establishment records	Yes	Approved structure on file; several posts shown as vacant.
2	Recruitment and appointment records	Yes	Complete for most appointments; a few files missing minutes.
3	Employment contracts/appointment letters	Yes	Present in personal files; terms generally standard.
4	Human resource policies and guidelines	Yes	Public Service Standing Orders and Code of Conduct available; no district-specific engagement policy.
5	Staff welfare records	No	No consolidated welfare register found.
6	Training and development records	Yes	Training needs list exists; limited evidence of implementation.
7	Payroll and allowance records	Yes	Payroll complete; some months show late processing.
8	Performance appraisal records	Yes	Appraisal forms on file for most staff; completion uneven across sections.
9	Attendance and absenteeism records	Yes	Attendance books kept; completeness varies by section.
10	Staff disciplinary records	Yes	Small number of cases recorded.
11	Promotion and career development records	Yes	Promotion minutes available; few recent promotions.
12	Employee grievances and complaints records	No	No formal grievance register; complaints handled informally.
13	Staff meeting minutes	Yes	Held irregularly; minutes exist for some meetings.
14	Employee engagement or staff satisfaction reports	No	No engagement or satisfaction survey report found.
15	District performance reports	Yes	Annual and quarterly reports available.

Source: *Kakumiro District Local Government records (2026).*

Table 10 shows that 12 of the 15 categories of records were available. The records showed that the approved staff structure had several vacant posts, that payroll was complete but some months showed late processing, that a training needs list existed but there was limited evidence of implementation, and that promotion minutes were available but recent promotions were few. Appraisal forms were on file for most staff, but completion was uneven across sections, and attendance books were kept but their completeness varied. Only a small number of disciplinary cases were recorded. Importantly, three records were not available: there was no consolidated staff welfare register, no formal grievance register, since complaints were handled informally, and no employee engagement or staff satisfaction survey report. The district relied on the Public Service Standing Orders and Code of Conduct and had no district-specific engagement policy. These gaps meant that the district had no systematic way of monitoring either employee engagement or the fulfilment of its obligations to employees.

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Employer Obligations and Employee Engagement

Questionnaire Findings on Employer Obligations

Table 11: Employees' Responses on Employer Obligations

Code	Statement	SA f (%)	A f (%)	NS f (%)	D f (%)	SD f (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interp.
B1	The Local Government provides employees with the resources necessary to perform their duties.	23 (21.3)	26 (24.1)	30 (27.8)	21 (19.4)	8 (7.4)	3.32	1.22	Moderate
B2	The district provides employees with clear information about their roles and responsibilities.	16 (14.8)	29 (26.9)	36 (33.3)	22 (20.4)	5 (4.6)	3.27	1.09	Moderate
B3	The District provides employees with opportunities for training and professional development.	19 (17.6)	31 (28.7)	27 (25.0)	25 (23.1)	6 (5.6)	3.30	1.17	Moderate
B4	The district provides employees with fair and timely remuneration according to their employment terms.	17 (15.7)	31 (28.7)	30 (27.8)	21 (19.4)	9 (8.3)	3.24	1.18	Moderate
B5	The Local Government provides employees with appropriate working conditions.	10 (9.3)	24 (22.2)	43 (39.8)	25 (23.1)	6 (5.6)	3.06	1.03	Moderate
B6	The district communicates important employment-related information to employees in a timely manner.	13 (12.0)	31 (28.7)	44 (40.7)	16 (14.8)	4 (3.7)	3.31	0.99	Moderate
B7	The Local Government treats employees fairly.	13 (12.0)	23 (21.3)	40 (37.0)	24 (22.2)	8 (7.4)	3.08	1.10	Moderate
B8	The district recognizes and appreciates employees for good performance.	15 (13.9)	27 (25.0)	40 (37.0)	19 (17.6)	7 (6.5)	3.22	1.10	Moderate
B9	The District provides employees with opportunities for career advancement.	19 (17.6)	32 (29.6)	24 (22.2)	25 (23.1)	8 (7.4)	3.27	1.21	Moderate
B10	The district provides adequate support to employees when they experience challenges in performing their duties.	17 (15.7)	28 (25.9)	37 (34.3)	22 (20.4)	4 (3.7)	3.30	1.08	Moderate
B11	The District fulfils the employment promises and commitments made to its employees.	16 (14.8)	27 (25.0)	34 (31.5)	20 (18.5)	11 (10.2)	3.16	1.19	Moderate
	Overall mean						**3.23**	**0.75**	**Moderate**

Source: *Primary data (2026); n = 108. SA = strongly agree, A = agree, NS = not sure, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree.*

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Table 11 shows that employer obligations were moderately met, with an overall mean of 3.23 (SD = 0.75). The highest-rated items were the provision of resources necessary to perform duties (mean = 3.32; 45.4% agreeing), timely communication of employment-related information (mean = 3.31; 40.7%), training and professional development opportunities (mean = 3.30; 46.3%) and support when employees face challenges (mean = 3.30; 41.7%). Opportunities for career advancement had the highest level of agreement (47.2%) but also the highest level of disagreement (30.6%), which shows that employees' experiences of career progression were divided.

The lowest-rated items were appropriate working conditions (mean = 3.06; only 31.5% agreeing), fair treatment of employees (mean = 3.08; 33.3% agreeing and 29.6% disagreeing) and the fulfilment of employment promises and commitments (mean = 3.16; 39.8% agreeing). This implies that while basic resources, information and pay were provided to a moderate extent, working conditions and fairness were the weakest employer obligations.

Interview Findings on Employer Obligations

Three themes emerged from the interviews on employer obligations: the obligations the district was expected to meet, the extent to which they were met and the constraints faced, and the influence of employer obligations on engagement.

Theme 1: Obligations the district was expected to meet

The interviewees identified timely salary, a safe workplace, tools to work with, training, fair treatment and a fair chance of promotion as the main obligations of the district. They agreed that salaries and statutory obligations were largely met, but that training, welfare and working conditions fell short. The CAO explained:

> *"Salary and statutory obligations are met reasonably well. Resources such as vehicles, stationery and ICT equipment are limited by the conditional grants we receive." (I1, Chief Administrative Officer)*

Theme 2: Extent to which the obligations were met and constraints faced

The Human Resource Manager similarly noted that "salaries are mostly on time. Training depends on what the budget allows and welfare support is modest" (I2), while a DSC member observed that "working conditions in some offices are poor" (I5), and another that "welfare support such as staff medical assistance is limited" (I7). The main challenges were a small local revenue base, delayed releases from the centre, a wage bill ceiling that limited recruitment and promotion, a limited training budget and unfilled vacancies.

Theme 3: Influence of employer obligations on employee engagement

All the interviewees believed that employer obligations influenced engagement. The CAO stated that "staff who feel looked after tend to give more effort. Where support is thin, people do only what is required" (I1), the DSC Chairperson that "fair treatment builds trust. Staff who trust the system are more willing to go the extra mile" (I3), and a DSC member that "clear information makes staff feel respected, and respect brings commitment" (I6). One member, however, noted that "if staff see no future they stop putting in extra effort, but those with stable jobs remain committed" (I4), suggesting that job security may sustain engagement even when other obligations are not met.

The documentary review confirmed the interviewees' account: payroll records were complete but some months were processed late, training needs had been identified but there was limited evidence of implementation, and no consolidated welfare register existed

Relationship between Employer Obligations and Employee Engagement

Pearson's correlation coefficient was computed between the employer obligations composite and employee engagement and its dimensions. The results are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 12: Correlation between Employer Obligations and Employee Engagement

Employer obligations with:	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Employee engagement (overall)	0.026	0.787	108
Vigour	−0.007	0.939	108
Dedication	−0.022	0.825	108
Absorption	0.094	0.333	108

Source: *Primary data (2026). * Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Table 12 shows that there was no statistically significant relationship between employer obligations and employee engagement (r = 0.026, p = 0.787, n = 108). The correlations with vigour (r = −0.007), dedication (r = −0.022) and absorption (r = 0.094) were also very weak

and not significant. The coefficient of determination (r^2 = 0.001) indicates that employer obligations accounted for less than 1% of the variation in employee engagement. This means that, in this sample, employees who rated the district's obligations more favourably did not report higher engagement than those who rated them less favourably. This quantitative result differs from the interviewees' belief that employer support increases effort, and the possible reasons are discussed in Chapter Five.

Discussion

The study found no significant relationship between employer obligations and employee engagement (r = 0.026, p = 0.787). This finding differs from Wondaa et al. (2024), who found a positive and significant relationship between psychological contract fulfilment and engagement among Ethiopian government employees, from Parku et al. (2023) in the Ghanaian public sector, and from Kasekende (2017), who found that employer obligations were positively associated with discretionary behaviour among Ugandan public servants. It also does not support the central proposition of the Psychological Contract Theory that employees reciprocate the fulfilment of employer obligations with greater involvement in their work (Rousseau, 1989, 1990).

Several explanations are possible. First, the interviewees indicated that the district met its core transactional obligations, especially salary and statutory benefits, reasonably well, while shortfalls were concentrated in training, welfare, working conditions and career progression. Where the core obligations are met for almost everyone, differences in how employees rate the remaining obligations may have little effect on their day-to-day engagement. Second, one DSC member observed that "those with stable jobs remain committed" even when they see limited prospects, which suggests that job security in the public service may sustain a basic level of engagement regardless of other obligations. Third, the interviewees attributed variations in engagement mainly to workload, understaffing, facilities, supervision and duty-station conditions, which are job demands and resources rather than psychological contract perceptions. This is consistent with the view that engagement is driven by job resources and meaningful work (Bakker et al., 2014; Albrecht et al., 2021), and with the criticism that the effects of the psychological contract may be weaker than the theory implies (Guest, 1998; Conway & Briner, 2005). Finally, the result may reflect measurement limitations, since the study relied on self-reported perceptions from a single questionnaire.

At the same time, the descriptive findings confirm that working conditions and fair treatment were the weakest employer obligations, and that training and welfare were limited by budget constraints, as also shown by the absence of a welfare register and the limited evidence of training implementation. These are legitimate concerns for the district in their own right, even though they were not statistically related to engagement in this sample.

Conclusions

Employer obligations were met to a moderate extent: salaries and statutory obligations were largely met, but working conditions, fair treatment, welfare and training were the weakest areas.

Limitations

The study faced some limitations during the study, and the steps taken to delimit each of them are stated below. First, all the quantitative variables were measured through self-reported perceptions in a single questionnaire, which may be affected by social desirability and does not capture actual engagement behaviour such as attendance. To delimit this, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and the questionnaire findings were triangulated with the interviews and the documentary review of attendance, appraisal and disciplinary records.

Second, the employee obligations items asked about the conduct of employees in general rather than the respondent's own obligations, which may have made the responses reflect perceptions of colleagues. To delimit this, the findings on employee obligations were interpreted as perceptions rather than as measures of individual conduct, and were compared with the interview and documentary evidence on attendance, supervision and discipline.

Third, the vigour sub-scale had an alpha just below 0.70, so results for vigour should be interpreted with some caution. To delimit this, the vigour results were interpreted together with the dedication and absorption sub-scales and the overall engagement scale (alpha = 0.879), and no conclusion was based on vigour alone.

Fourth, one sampled Finance Department employee and five of the ten District Service Commission members were not available, although the overall response rate remained high (95.0%). To delimit this, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Human Resource Manager and five Commission members, including the Chairperson, were interviewed, the 108 questionnaires covered both departments, and the response rate was above the 70% that Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) consider very good.

Finally, the study was cross-sectional and limited to two departments of one district, which limits generalisation to other departments and districts. To delimit this, the conclusions were restricted to the two departments studied, which were chosen because they handle the district's obligations to employees (Section 3.2), and further research in other departments and districts is recommended (Section 5.5).

Recommendations

The district should improve working conditions, including office space, furniture and ICT equipment, as far as its

budget allows, and prioritise the sections and duty stations with the poorest facilities.

Management should ensure fair and transparent treatment of all employees, particularly in the allocation of opportunities, workload and promotion.

The Human Resource Department should implement the existing training needs list through a costed annual training plan and keep records of training delivered.

The district should establish a staff welfare register and a basic welfare programme, such as support during illness or bereavement.

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List of abbreviations

ANOVA; Analysis of Variance

APA; American Psychological Association

CAO; Chief Administrative Officer

CVI; Content Validity Index

DSC; District Service Commission

ICT; Information and Communication Technology

MoPS; Ministry of Public Service

SA;Strongly Agree

SD; Strongly Disagree / Standard Deviation

SPSS; Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

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The author did not declare any conflict of interest

Data availability

Data is available upon request

Author contribution

Murungi Mary

; Conceptualisation, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Resources

Dr Doreen Akunda; Supervision, Validation, Visualisation, Data curation, Project administration, Supervision, Writing – review & editing

Author biography

Murungi Mary is a researcher at Team University

Dr Doreen Akunda is a supervisor at Team university

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