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### Career Development Practices and Employee Performance in Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited in Kenya

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*Career Development, Career Planning, Career Management, Career Counselling, Employee Performance*

Career development encompasses a range of practices designed to enhance employees' skills, knowledge, and competencies, enabling them to progress in their careers. As organizations strive for competitive advantage in a rapidly changing labour market, fostering employee growth has become a strategic priority. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of career development practices on employee performance in Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited in Kenya. The study had a target population of 150 employees working in MUWASCO. The researcher employed a census sampling technique and used self-administered questionnaires in data collection. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 22, which involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found that career management, planning, and counselling significantly influenced employee performance, with career counselling emerging as the most effective practice at MUWASCO. Regression analysis indicated that changes in career development practices would impact employee performance. The study concluded that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between career development practices and employee performance. The findings indicate that effective career development initiatives lead to increased employee engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction, all of which contribute to enhanced performance. Therefore, it is recommended that MUWASCO invest more resources in skills development, offer incentives to encourage participation in development programs, establish clear career guidance policies, and organize regular seminars, mentorship programs, and conferences. Additionally, adopting a variety of career development practices, such as job rotation, career progression ladders, job enrichment, and succession planning, could help achieve optimal performance.

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's world, organizations operate in an exceptionally competitive and dynamic environment, requiring them to not only attract but also retain qualified workers. After that is accomplished, firms must devise strategies that will assist workers improve their performance (Tajeddini, Martin & Ali, 2020). Since workers are an organization's most precious asset, human resource managers ought to take action to optimize the value they add to the aims and objectives of the firm while simultaneously lowering the risk of work-life conflicts (Dastisheh & Farooq, 2018). The work output of all workers within an organization determines its capacity to meet its targets and goals. For this reason, employee performance has a significant impact on the company's capacity to achieve its objectives (Fahim, 2018). When workers are assigned exciting tasks to complete, they have a greater likelihood to be driven to do so, and their output will undoubtedly be positive (Kudret, Erdogan & Bauer, 2019). In order to achieve optimum performance in an organization, the management of an organization must concentrate on maximizing the abilities of its workforce.

Employee performance is a person's output in terms of the quantity and quality of what is required of each employee in a particular job (Pradhan & Jena, 2017). Armstrong and Brown (2019) describe an employee's performance as his or her ability to execute duties efficiently in his or her job, which requires that he or she understands

and has an up-to-date job description for their position. If an organization desires to strengthen its relationship with its workers and build a lasting connection between them, it has to contribute to their development. (Al Ahabbi, Singh, Balasubramanian & Gaur, 2019). Skill development involves offering employees opportunities for advancement and facilitating training that enhances their abilities. This is crucial for boosting their employability both within the organization and in the broader job market (Walden, Jung & Westerman, 2017). There is no doubt that companies that prioritize career development for their employees tend to achieve greater productivity and performance, making them more competitive in the labour market than those that do not.

Career development benefits both employees and organizations (Matla, 2019). The positive effects are felt by both parties, as individual growth also supports the firm (Al Ahabbi et al., 2019). Investing in career development enables employees to acquire new skills, build confidence, and enhance their competencies, which in turn boosts their motivation and productivity at work (Muntz, Dormann & Kronenwett, 2019). Ngeny (2022) emphasized that career development fosters employee commitment by helping them envision a future within the organization and providing the support needed to navigate ongoing challenges (Otera, 2018). Thant and Chang (2021) noted that a lack of career growth can make employees feel stagnant, increasing their desire to leave and seek opportunities elsewhere.

Career development involves acquiring or transferring the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry out specific tasks (Papos & Kumar, 2019). It offers strategic benefits for both employers and employees (Hammond & Churchill, 2018). The primary aim of career development is to enhance employees' abilities to meet organizational goals and fulfil customer needs. As organizations strive to boost performance and productivity, career development has become increasingly appealing (Mandhanya, 2015). This process starts with identifying the organization's needs and the competencies of its employees (Van Vianen et al., 2018). Companies with highly skilled employees benefit from better navigation of their internal labour markets and a greater awareness of the importance of maintaining relevant skills (Akpan, Owor & Nsikan, 2017). Career development supports individuals and groups at all organizational levels (Fountain, 2018). As new skills are developed, employees gain greater competencies and improved performance. Ultimately, career development is a key strategy for attracting, motivating, and retaining top talent (Sheraz, Batool, & Adnan, 2019).

Gaebel et al., (2018) stated that career development enhances productivity, creativity, and long-term organizational effectiveness. These practices focus on supporting employees in achieving their career goals and can be sustained throughout their tenure with the organization. Additionally, career development can significantly reduce costs associated with high turnover rates and help maintain overall staff capabilities (Kollom et al., 2021). Many employees find themselves in positions with limited opportunities for advancement, leading to a sense of stagnation. This study examines various career development practices, such as career planning, counselling, and management, and their connections to employee performance, as supported by existing literature.

### **Statement of the problem**

Career development initiatives provide benefits for both employees and employers. Employees

acquire enhanced, marketable skills that promote professional mobility, while organizations experience increased commitment, talent retention, and performance, along with reduced employee turnover. A report highlighted that career development was a factor in 22% of employee departures (Work Institute, 2020). Effective career development enables staff to pursue growth opportunities that align with their abilities, resulting in significant personal satisfaction from fully utilizing their skills (Puffer, 2023).

Water companies have not been as vigilant as other industries in developing the careers of their labour force. In the public sector, the correlation between career development and employee performance has been extensively studied elsewhere and published in HR journals, but very few such studies are carried out in Kenya. Employees in Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited have been very relevant in ensuring that people living in Murang'a have reliable sources of safe and sufficient water and sewerage services. MUWASCO has invested in the career development of its workers, however, there is still a performance gap in terms of customer satisfaction and efficiency in service delivery. If MUWASCO does not set in place the proper career development practices in their productivity improvement strategies, they run the risk of experiencing a decline in company performance owing to the loss of important staff and the financial effects of employee turnover. It is against this background that the research will explore the effect of career development practices on employee performance to provide a better insight into this relationship.

### **Objective of the Study**

The primary objective of this study was to examine the effect of career development practices on employee performance in Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited in Kenya.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population of this study was

150 workers of MUWASCO. The researcher employed a census sampling technique which allowed everyone in the organization to participate in the study. Data was collected through the administration of questionnaires. The unit of measure adopted was a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate their response from the parameters given. Cronbach alpha was used to test the validity and reliability of the study instrument with all the items scoring 0.839 which is above the recommended

coefficients of 0.70 and above. The data obtained was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 where descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. Descriptive statistics were presented in their relative forms of means and standard deviations. Inferential statistics were presented using the regression analysis model.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Characteristic	Percentage
<b>Department</b>	
Technical	67%
Commercial	20%
ICT	5%
Administration	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	60%
Female	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
20-29	47%
30-39	20%
40-49	27%
50 and above	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Highest level of education</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Certificate	34%
Diploma	47%
Graduate	16%
Post-graduate	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Years in MUWASCO</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1-3 years	25%
4-5 years	38%
6-10 years	26%
Over 10 years	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Previous Work Experience</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
YES	70%
NO	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

The study found that the vast majority of the respondents, 67% were working in the technical department considering the role of the organization, 20% were in the commercial

department, 8% were in the administration department and 5% were in the ICT department. The study established that 60% were male while 40% were female. This shows that both genders

were represented in the study. Regarding the age of the respondents, the study established that the majority were between the ages of 20 and 29 as represented by 47% with only a very small percentage of 6% who were 50 years and above. Those between 30-39 years were 20% while 27% were in the age bracket of 40-49 years. This implies that different age groups participated in the study and both young and older employees had an equal chance of being chosen without segregation and were offered the opportunity to provide information on the data collection instrument. A vast majority of the respondents had gone up to the diploma level (47%), followed by the certificate level 34% with (16%) having bachelor's degrees. Only 3% of the targeted population had attained a Master's degree. The respondents were adequately informed to understand the concepts of career development

and employee performance. Therefore, execution would go as planned if the level of education was something to go.

Findings revealed that the majority of the workers as represented by 38% had been working in MUWASCO for a period of 4 to 5 years indicating that they had spent enough time in the organization to respond to queries regarding career development practices. 24% had worked between 1 and 3 years, 26% between 6 and 10 years and 11% over 10 years. These findings imply that the majority had worked in MUWASCO long enough to enjoy the career development practices offered in MUWASCO. Results indicated that 70% of the respondents had previous work experience before joining MUWASCO while 30% had joined MUWASCO as their first employer.

**Table 2: Career Development and Employee Performance**

Parameters	Mean	Std. Deviation
My efficiency has improved because of the career management at MUWASCO.	3.75	0.423
I am more satisfied with my job because of the career planning availed.	3.72	0.393
The career counselling offered has increased my commitment.	3.74	0.133
Career growth plans availed at MUWASCO have enhanced my productivity.	3.78	0.844
Career development has positively contributed to my performance.	3.93	0.732
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.90</b>	<b>2.525</b>
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>0.505</b>

From the findings, the majority of the workers reported that they were more efficient as a result of the career management at MUWASCO. This was demonstrated by a mean of 3.75 and  $SD=0.423$ . These findings are consistent with a study conducted by Lyria, Namusonge, and Karanja (2017) who established that career management techniques contribute to the overall performance of an organization by improving the competency, retention, and commitment of its workforce. With a mean of 3.72 and  $SD=0.393$ , the employees reported that they were more satisfied with their jobs because of the career counselling availed within the organization. These findings echoed a previous study by Afifah (2011) who established that career planning is significant

as it helps improve work effectiveness and performance. Navaid (2015) added that career planning is very likely to produce qualified personnel. A study by Adekola (2011) shows that career planning has a link to future employee career development and it also helps individuals adjust to changes in the future (Rbu, Popa and Pipaş, 2014).

The study further sought to establish whether career counselling offered in the organization enhanced the commitment of employees. The results showed that the majority were in agreement as indicated by a mean of 3.74 and  $SD=0.133$ . The findings of this study were in alignment with a similar study by Trivellas, Kakkos, Blanas, and Santouridis (2015), which



demonstrated empirically and statistically that career counselling improves employee performance. Further, respondents also reported that the career growth plans availed at MUWASCO have improved their productivity. This was demonstrated by a mean of 3.78 and 0.884. These findings support the previous work of Akkermans, Nykänen, and Vuori (2015) which established that career growth plans can enhance career competencies such as motivation, success, networking, self-profit, exploration of work and career control, freedom, resistance to a setback, career behaviour-related, perception of work worthwhile and active participation in the workplace.

Results indicated that a vast majority of the respondents agreed that career development has positively contributed to their performance. Respondents added that career development initiatives offered improved their skills, confidence, loyalty, and commitment to the organization. From the analysis, employees of

MUWASCO reported that career development practices have a great effect on their performance. They attributed their efficiency, job satisfaction, commitment, productivity, motivation, and overall contribution towards the organization to the career development practices. The results of this study are in tandem with the work of Muspawi (2017) and Kaseger (2013), who found a significant relationship between career development and employee performance. Their study revealed that assisting potential employees in continually improving their capabilities may include creating a favourable working environment for them to achieve optimal performance. Similarly, a study done by Worotitjan (2016) established that employee performance improves as better career development practices are implemented.

The results were further analyzed through inferential statistics to establish whether there was a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study.

**Table 3: Model Summary for Career Development**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.860 <sup>a</sup>	.740	.717	0.19079

a. Predictors (Constant), Career Development

The R-value of 0.86 indicates that there is a linear relationship between career development and employee performance because of the strong correlation coefficient. The coefficient of determination, R-square value of 0.74 implied that 74% of the variation in employee performance is

influenced by career development practices while the remaining 26% is explained by other practices which are not examined in this study. An adjusted R square value of 0.717 implied that 71.7% of the variance in employee performance can be explained by changes in career development.

**Table 4: ANOVA for Career Development**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.543	6	2.0905	2.481	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	4.407	121	0.0364		
	Total	16.950	127			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Career Development

Since the p-value of the F- statistic was less than 0.05, it implied that considering the simple regression model above fitted, career

development practices had a significant effect on employee performance at MUWASCO.

**Table 5: Coefficients of Regression**

Coefficients	Coef.	Std. Err.	Beta	t	P-value (Sig at 5%).
(Constant)	1.099666	1.152199		.95	0.000
1. Career Management	.315950	.127262	.31595	2.84	0.000
2. Career Planning	.025791	.130508	.025791	.22	0.000
3. Career Counselling	.097957	.200348	.397957	3.84	0.000

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance in MUWASCO

$$Y_i = 1.099666 + 0.31595 X_{i1} + 0.025791 X_{i2} + 0.397957 X_{i3} \dots \quad \text{Eqn (1)}$$

From Table 5, the regression coefficient of career management is 0.315950, implying that for every unit increase in career management, the dependent variable, employee performance increases by 0.315950 units. Further, the statistics (t=2.84, p-value = 0.000 < 0.05) indicate that there exists a statistically significant relationship between employee performance of MUWASCO and career management at a 5% level of significance. This implies that changes in career management are related to changes in employee performance at MUWASCO.

The regression coefficient of career planning is 0.257906, which implies that for every unit of increase in career planning, the dependent variable, employee performance increases by 0.257906 units. The statistics (t=0.22, p-value=0.000<0.05) indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between the employee performance and career planning of MUWASCO at a significance level of 5%. This indicates that career planning initiatives result in positive changes in employee performance.

Notably, the regression coefficient of career counselling is 0.097957, which implies that for every unit of increase in career counselling, employee performance increases by 0.097957 units. The statistics (t=3.84, p-value=0.000<0.05) indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between employee performance and career counselling of MUWASCO at a significance level of 5%. This implies that career counselling services contribute to employee performance.

**CONCLUSION**

The study established a significant relationship between career development and employee performance. Career development positively contributed to employee performance through improved efficiency, job satisfaction, employee commitment and overall productivity of the workers increased. From the findings, the study concludes that career management and employee performance have a strong and positive relationship with supervisory support and performance feedback being the most excellent parameters. Further, career planning has a statistically significant relationship with employee performance. Based on the findings, the study concludes that career counselling is a significant element in career development and also has a significant relationship with employee performance.

The study recommends that MUWASCO's management should invest sufficient resources in skills development to improve employee competencies. Recognizing the crucial role of performance feedback, the study suggests that supervisors should provide regular feedback on results and monitor employees' behavioural patterns and productivity. Additionally, the study recommends that organizations host in-house conferences and support employees in attending relevant seminars, workshops, and conferences for exposure and to enhance their skills. Offering incentives to boost participation in development programs is also recommended. To optimize performance, the study encourages the implementation of diverse career development practices, such as job rotation, career progression ladders, job enrichment, and succession planning. Furthermore, organizations should establish a clear policy for career guidance in their

development programs. Utilizing training needs analysis can help design effective training and coaching initiatives. Lastly, the study advocates for mentorship programs for all employees to prepare them for future roles, equip them to handle challenges and improve their performance levels.

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