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Career Development Practices and Job Performance in Nakuru County Government, Kenya

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Abstract:

*Organizations today operate in a highly dynamic and competitive environment. To remain effective and efficient, they must respond quickly to changing employee needs by implementing appropriate HRM practices. The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of career development practices on job performance in the county government of Nakuru. This study was anchored on Equity Theory. The study employed an explanatory research design since the design focuses on studying a situation or problem to explain the relationships between variables. The target population for this study was all 2411 employees from the county government of Nakuru County's various departments. Using Nassiuma's formula for sample determination, a sample of 96 was obtained, which was allocated proportionately across the county departments. In this study, questionnaires were used to collect data since they are simple and time-saving for both the researcher and the respondents, and they allow for rapid contact with a large number of respondents. The questionnaire was piloted to ensure its reliability and validity. Data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 23). Correlation findings showed that career development [$r = .703^{**}$, $p=.000$] had a positive and significant correlation with job performance. Furthermore, the overall model was statistically significant ($F = 76.133$, $p=.000$), indicating that career development practices were a significant predictor of job performance. The study concluded that career development significantly influenced job performance. The study recommends the need to address aspects of career plateau amongst employees as most county structures are static, which may lead to low morale.*

Keywords: Career development and job performance, human resource practices and job performance, career development in nakuru county, nakuru county, deborah shiroko, daniel .M. wanyoike

1. Background of the Study

Human resource management (HRM) is the organizational function concerned with the procurement, development, compensation, integration and maintenance of the organization's personnel for the purpose of contributing toward the accomplishment of that organization's objectives (Detaille *et al.*, 2020). The main role of HRM is to provide advice and services that support organizations and their managers to get things done through people. The manner in which HRM is delivered within public sector organizations has been the subject of much debate over the past decade (Irfak, 2022). This is because HRM is not a single homogenous function but involves a variety of roles and activities that differ from one organization to another and even at different levels. Furthermore, the HRM function can only be beneficial to the organization if it is accompanied by well-aligned employment practices. Employees are an essential resource that reflects the effectiveness and efficiency with which goals and objectives are met in any organization. According to Irfak (2022), for employees to be productive, certain practices within the organization must be encouraged, such as staff training and bonuses. As a result, excellent employee practice implies that the employee will perform duties efficiently and effectively to meet agreed-upon job objectives. Furthermore, in order to maximize employee performance, organizations must implement effective employee management practices. This ability to manage employee performance effectively can result in increased profit margins, cost savings, customer satisfaction, growth, or market share.

In Pakistan, Khan *et al.* (2020) aimed to gain knowledge of Pakistan Railways' awareness of and adoption of decent work practices. Their research revealed that Pakistan Railways is not doing enough to promote important decent work practices or to put them into practice. The high unemployment rate and scarcity of employment prospects in the labor market, they claimed, made workers willing to put up with subpar working conditions. However, they have a very high level of interest in learning about their labor rights and the principles of decent employment. Furthermore, there is very little evidence that higher authorities are aware of or care about the problems facing their employees. Additionally, it shows a substantial communication gap across management levels. In Tanzania, Suta (2019) argued that employment

practices are essential in influencing organizational performance. They sought to assess the practices commenced by employees as practitioners in the performance of local government authorities in Tanzania based on competence, commitment and performance culture. Findings revealed that human resource practices influence performance in local government authorities in several ways, including competence, commitment and working culture. Local government authorities obtain these employment practices through recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, performance management and work environment. Finally, they recommended that employment practices and performance in local government authorities is a two-way traffic and the government must make sure that it commits to and ensures that employees are supplied with all the expectations from the government to conform to the good practices influencing performance.

According to Baridula and Adanma (2021), work habits are crucial to boosting employee retention in manufacturing firms in Nigeria. To evaluate the population of 200 employees of manufacturing enterprises in Nigeria, a cross-sectional research approach was used. The results demonstrate a favourable and significant correlation between flexible work arrangements and employee retention in Nigerian manufacturing firms. How well flexible workplace policies are implemented to increase employees' affective commitment through the availability of career progression chances, job autonomy, and promotional opportunities determines the degree of employee retention. To increase employee retention, the report advised industrial firms in Nigeria to implement flexible work practices. Organizations in Kenya should focus on employment practices as a critical component to increase their effectiveness. Employment practices have been linked to a variety of management concepts as well as behaviours, including management styles, job satisfaction, employee empowerment, total quality management, and job performance (Chege, 2020). Therefore, according to Muriithi (2020), career development is a proactive initiative that individual employees and organizations undertake to realize growth and personal development and it is spread out throughout a person's career life.

2. Statement of the Problem

Ideally, employee job performance can be improved by offering a competitive salary, rewards, advancement, and enhanced job security. These elements are critical in improving employees' job performance. Thus, firms must effectively obtain and utilize human resources to succeed. Most studies on HRM have not established clearly defined constructs measuring job performance. Subjective measures, such as employee commitment, absenteeism and employee morale and satisfaction, have been used in some studies to evaluate job performance. Thus, firms must design their human resources to fit into the structure of the firm for the firm to achieve its objectives. While these measures are important, the deployment of effective employment practices would lead to enhanced job performance. Furthermore, county governments contribute approximately 40% of GDP and employ 38% of the labor force. Furthermore, studies in employment practices have ignored contextual variables, particularly practices that influence employee performance (Amran *et al.*, 2020). Thus, there is a scarcity of studies demonstrating the relationship between employment practices and job performance. Counties face challenges such as improving quality and improving people skills, employee motivation, career development, absenteeism, and workforce planning. Previous studies have suggested that various employment practices are critical in enhancing employee job performance, including planning, resourcing, training and development, reward management, performance management, involvement, welfare, career development, satisfaction, safety and health programs, among others. At the county level, planning of the type, quantity and quality of HR, managing employee motivation, structuring work into career paths and developing schemes to enhance involvement and satisfaction play an essential role in enhancing job performance (Chege, 2020). According to Munywoki (2023), Nakuru County was not in the top 10 list of best-performing counties in Kenya and had a dismal score of 38%. Therefore, this raises a lot of concern regarding the quality of service delivery as well as the productivity of employees. Notably, the Auditor General Report on Public Complaints of 2021 highlighted several issues pertaining to employee productivity, such as an increased number of complaints regarding poor service delivery. However, Nakuru County still faces numerous challenges, including low revenue collection, laxity in enforcement, low morale, and unmet performance targets, among other challenges. All these challenges suggest the existence of ineffective deployment of employment practices to meet county performance goals. Understanding employment practices such as career development and how they influence employee job performance is, therefore, critical. Thus, this study seeks to fill this knowledge gap.

3. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to assess the influence of career development practices on job performance in the county government of Nakuru, Kenya.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Equity Theory. The Equity theory was proposed by Adam Smith in 1965 and is based on the assumption that employees become demotivated, both in relation to their jobs and to their employers, when they perceive unfairness in employment practices (Osibanjo *et al.*, 2020). Employees may respond in various ways, including de-motivation, reduced effort, dissatisfaction, and, in extreme cases, disruption. The theory of motivation, like Maslow's five levels of needs and Herzberg's two factors of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), states that positive outcomes and high levels of motivation can be expected only when employees perceive their treatment to be fair. Industrial psychologists have widely used equity theory in business settings to describe the relationship between an employee's

motivation and his or her perception of equitable or inequitable treatment. Equity theory introduces the concept of social comparisons, in which employees evaluate their own input/output ratios in comparison to the input/output ratios of other employees (Winterton & Cafferkey, 2019). Employee time, expertise, qualifications, experience, intangible personal qualities such as drive and ambition, and interpersonal skills are examples of inputs in this context. Financial compensation, perquisites, benefits, and flexible work arrangements are examples of outcomes. Employees who perceive inequity will seek to reduce it, either by distorting inputs and/or outcomes in their own minds, changing inputs and/or outcomes directly, or leaving the organization (Alice *et al.*, 2021). These are perceptions of organizational justice, or more specifically, injustice. As a result, the theory is related to employee motivation and job performance.

4.2. Career Development

Career development is defined as deliberate actions taken by organizations to attract, hire and develop employees to motivate them to stay for longer in the organization. It involves a good work environment and work structures that encourage staff to stay and play their trade in one organization for a long (Muriithi, 2020). Additionally, it necessitates careful planning for personnel development and placement throughout the many organizational divisions and functional areas. It is a systematic and well-planned procedure that helps people become aware of their strengths and weaknesses. It entails letting employees realize the extent of their abilities, drives, talents, and interests and devising plans to help them achieve their stated professional goals and maximize their strengths. Throughout a person's career life, career development is spread out as proactive actions that the organization and individual employees take to accomplish progress and personal development (Kurdi & Alshurideh, 2020). Kigunda and Kwasira (2017) conducted a study on the impact of human resource practices on the performance of microfinance institutions in Nakuru. It was also decided that all employees would be expected to participate in training and development, but only after their training requirements had been determined. Employee training was inferred to be conducted internally. The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics. Tables were used to present the findings of the investigation. The study found that succession planning is critical to improving MFI performance. It was also determined that by improving MFI training and development, the MFI performance will likely improve. Kianto, Sáenz and Aramburu (2017) conducted a study on the conceptual model in which a human resource management method that employs openly knowledge-based HRM practices has an impact on a company's intellectual capital, resulting in improved innovation performance. The study used structural equation modelling to evaluate this theory in a survey dataset of 180 Spanish enterprises. The findings revealed that intellectual capital mediates the association between employment practices and innovation performance in a positive way. Human capital influences structural and relational capital in part through knowledge-based HRM practices, and human capital influences innovation performance by boosting structural and relational capital.

5. Research Methodology

The study employed an explanatory research design. Explanatory research focuses on studying a situation or problem to explain the relationships between variables. Further, explanatory research seeks to explain why a phenomenon is going on and can be used for hypothesis testing. The target population for this study was all 2411 employees in the middle, lower management and operational levels from the various county ministries in the county government of Nakuru headquarters. Using Nassiuma's formula for sample calculation, a sample of 96 respondents was obtained and then stratified and simple random sampling was used to target the said staff in each of the institutes. This study used questionnaires to collect data from the target group. The questionnaire was used to collect data because it is straightforward and less time-consuming for both the researcher and the respondents and it enables reaching a representative number of respondents with ease (Bryman, 2016). The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended items that were aimed at obtaining data from the respondents. Pilot testing was done on 12 individuals who were in similar positions in County Government of Baringo, Kenya. Before commencing data collection, the researcher sought a research permit from the National Council of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), as legally required for all researchers conducting studies in Kenya. Upon receipt of the research permit, the researcher sought permission from relevant departments after outlining the objectives of the current research to the relevant authorities. The researcher then administered the questionnaires to the individual members of the population within the public technical institutes. The collected data were then analysed quantitatively by first coding and then they were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The collected data were analysed using both descriptive (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Regression and Correlation). Before correlation and regression analysis, the data were tested to ascertain they met the various assumptions of Ordinary Least Squares, including linearity, normality, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity.

6. Research Findings and Discussions

The researcher issued 96 questionnaires, of which 80 questionnaires were filled out correctly and hence were used for analysis, representing a response rate of 83.3%. Brymann (2016) indicated that a high response rate (>70%) from a small random sample is preferable, which is an important element in proving the significance of the responses. Therefore, the response rate of 83.3% was considered sufficient to enable further analysis.

6.1. Career Development and Job Performance

The findings on various propositions on career development and job performance are shown in table 1.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev
In my department, career progression and paths are well-defined	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.3%)	7 (8.7%)	41 (51.2%)	30 (37.5%)	4.23	0.763
Our supervisors often rotate us across sections in our department, thus giving me wide experience	1 (1.3%)	2 (2.5%)	11 (13.8%)	41 (51.2%)	25 (31.2%)	4.09	0.814
Our county offers promotions based on merit, thus encouraging enhanced performance	1 (1.3%)	8 (10%)	23 (28.7%)	27 (33.7%)	21 (26.3%)	3.74	1.003
My county has a well-structured scheme for staff promotions across all cadres	0 (0%)	7 (8.7%)	15 (18.9%)	29 (36.3%)	29 (36.3%)	4.00	0.955
We have often offered timely training identified based on performance appraisals	4 (5%)	13 (16.2%)	21 (26.3%)	20 (25%)	22 (27.5%)	3.54	1.201
The training is effective in enhancing my individual performance	5 (6.1%)	15 (18.9%)	22 (27.5%)	20 (25%)	18 (22.5%)	3.39	1.206
In my county, career planning is taken seriously and applies to all employees	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (7.4%)	41 (51.3%)	33 (41.3%)	4.34	0.615

Table 1: Career Development and Job Performance

The findings indicate that the majority of the respondents (88.7%) agreed that career progression and paths were well-defined, while only 2.6% disagreed. Further, 82.4% of the respondents agreed that supervisors rotated employees across sections in their department, thus giving them wide experience, while only 3.8% disagreed. Further, 60% agreed that the county offered promotions based on merit, thus encouraging enhanced performance, while only 11.3% disagreed. 72.6% agreed that their county has a well-structured scheme for staff promotions across all cadres, while only 8.7% disagreed. 52.5% agreed that they were offered timely training based on performance appraisals, while 21.2% disagreed. 47.5% of the respondents agreed that training was effective in enhancing their individual performance, while only 25% disagreed. Finally, 92.6% of the respondents agreed that career planning was taken seriously and applied to all employees. Analysis of the standard deviations indicated that the standard deviations were close to 1, which indicated a convergence of opinions amongst the respondents. Further, with a grand mean of 3.90, it was deduced that career development influenced job performance. This is further supported by the findings of Anwar and Abdullah (2021), who found that career planning, decentralization and job transfers were positively associated with organizational performance.

6.2. Job Performance

The findings on the measurement of the dependent variable, job performance, are shown in table 2.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std.Dev
I am able to meet my annual performance targets	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.3%)	8 (10%)	42 (52.4%)	28 (35%)	4.19	0.765
I often meet targets on time	2 (2.5%)	2 (2.5%)	13 (16.2%)	44 (55%)	19 (23.8%)	3.95	0.855
I meet my performance targets with minimum cost	2 (2.5%)	4 (5%)	19 (23.7%)	35 (43.8%)	20 (25%)	3.84	0.947
My performance outputs meet quality standards	2 (2.5%)	5 (6.3%)	16 (20%)	37 (46.2%)	20 (25%)	3.85	0.956
We often perform well together as a department	3 (3.8%)	3 (3.8%)	17 (21.2%)	28 (35%)	29 (36.2%)	3.96	1.037
Our department has achieved reduced wastage	1 (1.3%)	6 (7.5%)	15 (18.8%)	33 (41.2%)	25 (31.2%)	3.94	0.959
My individual and department's performance has been steadily increasing	1 (1.3%)	3 (3.8%)	15 (18.7%)	30 (37.5%)	31 (38.7%)	4.09	0.917

Table 2: Measurement of Job Performance

From the findings, 87.4% of the respondents agreed that they were able to meet my annual performance targets, while 2.6% disagreed. Similarly, 78.8% of the respondents agreed they met targets on time, while 5% disagreed. Furthermore, 68.6% of the respondents agreed they met their performance targets with minimum cost, while only 7.5% disagreed. 71.2% agreed that their performance outputs met quality standards, while only 8.8% disagreed. 71.2% agreed they perform well together as a department, while only 7.6% disagreed. 72.4% agreed that their department has achieved reduced wastage, while only 8.8% disagreed. Finally, 76.2% of the respondents agreed that their individual and department performance has been steadily increasing, while only 5.1% disagreed. With a grand mean of 3.97, the study deduced that employment practices influenced enhanced job performance. The findings are in agreement with those of Zed *et al.* (2020), who found that employment practices significantly influenced employees' job performance.

6.3. Diagnostic Tests

Four assumptions, namely: normality, linearity of variables, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity, were tested.

6.3.1. Normality Test

In this study, the normal distribution of data was tested by use of Shapiro Wilk Test. Regression analysis assumes that variables have normal distributions. For datasets smaller than 2000 elements, Shapiro-Wilk test is used, while for data with more than 2000 elements Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used. In the test, the null-hypothesis is that the population is not normally distributed. If the p-value is less than the chosen alpha level, then the null hypothesis is rejected. If the p-value is greater than the chosen alpha level, then the null hypothesis is not rejected and thus, data is normally distributed. The findings of the normality test are presented in table 3.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro_Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig	Statistic	df	Sig.
Job Performance	.117	80	.008	.962	80	.017

Table 3: Test of Normality

From the findings, using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, since there were only 80 elements, the p-value is 0.117. In this case, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the data comes from a normal distribution.

6.3.2. Linearity of Variables

The dependent and independent variables must have a linear and additive relationship for the linearity assumption to hold. Regardless of the value of the independent variable, a linear relationship occurs when the change in the dependent variable caused by one unit change in the independent variable is constant. According to the additive principle, the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable must be wholly unrelated to other factors in the study model. To ascertain the linearity of variables, a plot of observed cumulative probabilities versus expected cumulative probabilities was obtained, as shown in figure 1.

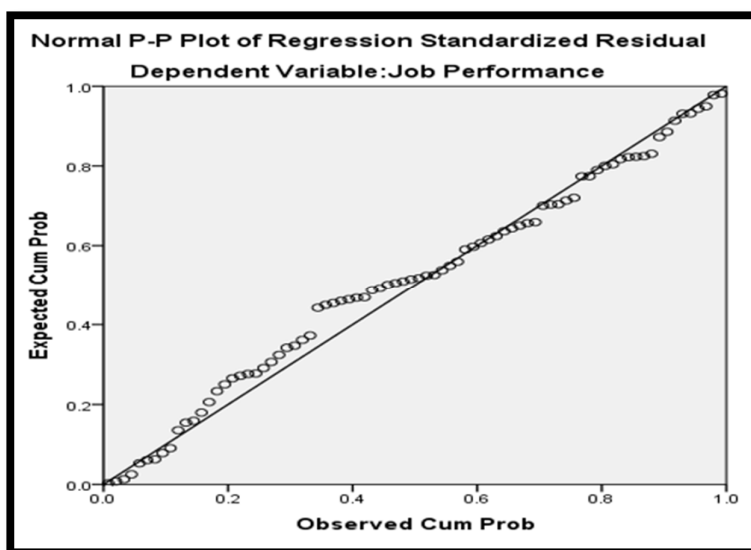


Figure 1: Test of Linearity

From the plot in figure 1, the expected cumulative probability scatter lay along observed cumulative probabilities, indicating the linearity of variables. The study, thus, concluded that there was a linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

6.3.3. Test of Homoscedasticity

When the error term has a constant variance, which is a presumption broken by outliers or extreme values in the data, homoscedasticity and heteroscedasticity cause standard errors to be unreasonably large or small, which results in inaccurate parameter estimations. A residual versus anticipated values plot is employed to test this presumption. If there is no discernible pattern in the scatter in the resulting plot, the data might be called homoscedastic. The scatter plot for the test of homoscedasticity is shown in figure 2.

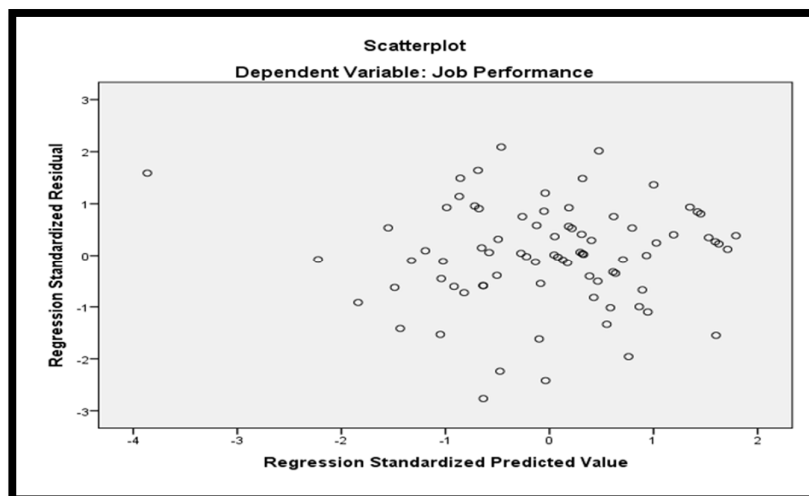


Figure 2: Homoscedasticity Scatter Plot

From the scatter plot in figure 2, the scatter points of Predicted versus Residual values spread evenly and do not take any particular pattern across the plot area, indicating homoscedasticity.

6.3.4. Test of Multicollinearity

When there is multicollinearity, one independent variable can be accurately predicted linearly by another independent variable. There are two major drawbacks to multicollinearity: first, it makes it challenging to determine the true relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable; and second, when there are many highly correlated independent variables, the standard errors are overestimated and the confidence intervals are wider, which results in less accurate parameter estimates. Scores from Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) were examined to check for multicollinearity. Since VIF and Tolerance have an inverse connection, tolerance values can also be utilized as indicators.

VIF factors of less than 5 are commonly recognized as indicators of minimal correlation and negligible effect between the independent variables.

6.4. Correlation Analysis

Before undertaking correlation analysis, the respondents' ratings on the propositions were cumulated to obtain a composite score for the variable. The composite scores were then correlated to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between career development practices and job performance. The correlation findings are presented in table 4.

		Project Performance
Career Development Practices	Pearson Correlation	.703**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	80
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

Table 4: Career Development Practices and Job Performance

From the correlation findings, it can be established that there was a strong positive correlation between career development and job performance [$r = .703^{**}$, $p = .000$]. Since the correlation was strong and positive in nature, it implied that higher levels of job performance can be associated with how countries are able to enhance career development through well-planned career management initiatives. The findings agree with those of Manzoor *et al.* (2019), who opined that organizations that invest in the career development of their employees reap the benefits of enhanced performance due to increased employee loyalty.

6.5. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis enables estimating the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more predictor variables. Since the collected data met all the assumptions for ordinary least squares, regression analysis was undertaken and the results are presented in table 5.

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.703a	.494	.487	.44479

Table 5: Linear Regression Analysis for Career Development

From the findings in table 5, it was established that the fitted model R-square of 0.494 implied that career development practices explained 49.4% of the variation in job performance. Therefore, other variables not investigated in the present study accounted for 50.6% of the variation in job performance. The ANOVA findings are shown in table 6. From table 6, the overall model was statistically significant ($F = 76.133$, $p = .000$) since the p-value was less than 0.05.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	15.062	1	15.062	76.133	.000b
Residual	15.432	78	.198		
Total	30.494	79			

Table 6: ANOVA

The regression coefficients were as shown:

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.453	.293		4.958	.000
Career Development	.646	.074	.703	8.725	.000

Table 7: Regression Coefficients

From the fitted model, the study established the following regression function:

$$Y = 1.453 + 0.646X_1$$

Where:

Y = Job Performance,

X₁ = Career Development

From table 7, given the null hypothesis stated: H₀₁: Career development does not significantly influence job performance in the county government of Nakuru, Kenya. Since career development practices [$t = 8.725$, $P = .000 < .05$], the null hypothesis was rejected and the study concluded that career development significantly influences job performance.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded that career progression and paths in county governments were well-defined, which was attributed to the structures created in the county governance system that were developed upon enactment of the 2010

constitution. Further, the study concluded that supervisors in county governments rotated employees across sections in their department, thus giving them wide experience. It was also concluded that counties offered promotions based on merit, thus encouraging enhanced performance. The study also concluded that county governments have a well-structured scheme for staff promotions across all cadres, which can be attributed to the role played by County Public Service Boards. On training, the study concluded that county governments offered timely training identified based on performance appraisals. The study also concluded that career planning in county governments was taken seriously and applied to all employees. Since the correlation between career development and job performance was strong and positive and the subsequent regression analysis indicated that career development was a significant predictor of job performance, the study concluded that career development positively and significantly influences job performance. The study recommends the need to address aspects of career plateau amongst employees as most county structures are static, which may lead to low morale. It is suggested that future researchers investigate other employment practices that influence job performance that have not been addressed by the present study. Similarly, more research should be undertaken to evaluate these factors across different counties and sectors.

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