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### Nexus between Career Planning and Employee Performance in Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited in Kenya

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Self-Assessment.

Organisations providing essential services are crucial for job creation and significantly contribute to economic growth in developing countries like Kenya. However, many of these organisations face challenges in meeting customer needs and maintaining employee performance standards. This study examined the effect of career planning on employee performance at Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited (MUWASCO) in Kenya. Using a descriptive research survey design, the study employed a census sampling technique, resulting in a sample of 150 respondents. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires. Data analysis was conducted with the aid of SPSS as a research tool and included both descriptive and inferential statistics. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to assess the significant differences in the effect of career planning on employee performance. The findings established that career planning has a significant impact on employee performance, with regression analysis showing that changes in career planning directly affect performance outcomes. The study concluded that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between career planning and employee performance. Based on these findings, it is recommended that MUWASCO should allocate more resources to skills development, provide incentives to encourage employee participation in development programs, establish a clear career guidance policy, and organise regular seminars, mentorship programs, and conferences to further enhance employee performance.

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**INTRODUCTION**

In today's fast-evolving workplace, career planning has become a key aspect of human resource management that can have a meaningful impact on how employees perform. Career planning is the process where individuals set professional goals and figure out how to reach them, often with the support of their employer (Armstrong, 2020). As organisations strive to retain top talent and stay competitive, aligning employees' personal ambitions with broader organisational goals through career development has become increasingly important (Noe, 2017). Employees who engage in thoughtful career planning are often more motivated and satisfied in their roles. This kind of engagement is linked to better job performance, greater commitment to the organisation, and lower employee turnover (Dessler, 2020; Opatha, 2019). When organisations invest in their people's growth, it sends a strong message of trust and support, which in turn fosters loyalty and productivity. This alignment not only helps individuals move forward in their careers but also helps businesses effectively utilise their human capital to achieve strategic goals (Kumari & Saini, 2021). Unfortunately, many companies, especially in developing countries, still fail to see career planning as a strategic tool for managing performance.

Employee performance plays a vital role in determining how successful an organisation can be, especially in today's fast-paced and competitive environment. It reflects how well workers carry out their tasks, contribute to goals, and demonstrate

behaviours that boost innovation and productivity (Armstrong, 2020). Strong performance drives better operational results and helps organisations remain adaptable and sustainable in changing markets (Dessler, 2020). Among the many factors that influence performance, career planning has gained attention for its ability to guide and inspire employees. When employees have access to development tools like training, mentorship, and career pathways, they are more likely to stay engaged and perform better (Noe, 2017; Kumari & Saini, 2021). Organisations that value their workforce understand the importance of offering long-term, stable career opportunities. This is especially true for younger employees, who often seek growth and a sense of control over their career paths (Rachmaliya & Efendy, 2017). Career development programs help employees make informed choices and remove obstacles that might hold them back. These programs are most effective when they align personal career goals with the organisation's broader talent strategy. Moreover, they enhance organisational efficiency by equipping employees, especially those seeking more flexible career paths, with the right skills and support (Kumari & Saini, 2021).

Even in an age of automation and technological advancements, human resources remain an organisation's most valuable resource. For any forward-looking company, investing in its people is critical (Lawler, 2012). Career planning also helps bring clarity to roles, reduce confusion, and build confidence, which are tied to stronger performance (Opatha, 2019). When employees feel supported in

their development, they're more likely to go the extra mile and align their efforts with the organisation's goals (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013). On the flip side, neglecting career growth can lead to disengagement, poor morale, and even higher costs due to lower productivity. A lack of career planning often results in skill gaps and poor job performance, while a strategic approach ensures that the right talent is available when needed. Despite growing awareness of employee-focused human resource practices, the link between career planning and employee performance still hasn't been fully explored in many organisational settings, especially in developing countries. This study aims to bridge that gap by examining how career planning affects employee performance and by offering practical insights to guide strategic human resource decisions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the water and sanitation sector, the quality of service delivery depends heavily on how well employees perform, especially those working in operations, maintenance, customer service, and ensuring public health standards are met. Yet, many companies in this sector, particularly in developing countries like Kenya, struggle with persistent issues related to low employee performance. Common signs of these challenges include slow responses to faults and customer complaints, unreliable service, frequent staff turnover, low morale, and poor utilisation of employee skills and potential (Mutinda & Gachunga, 2020). A closer look reveals that one of the key contributors to these problems is the absence of structured career planning frameworks. Many employees work in environments where there is little clarity about growth opportunities, limited access to training or development programs, and no clear path for succession. Without these essential career support systems, it's easy for employees to feel stuck, unmotivated, and disengaged, leading to a drop in productivity and performance (Kumari & Saini, 2021).

In a sector where operational efficiency and timely service are critical, the lack of career planning can result in stalled professional development, reduced accountability, and low staff morale. Ultimately, this undermines the quality of services provided to the public and can negatively affect customer satisfaction and adherence to regulatory standards. While it is widely acknowledged that employee performance is vital for effective service delivery, there is still little research on how career planning impacts performance in the water and sanitation industry. Gaining insights into this relationship is essential for crafting effective human resource strategies that can boost employee engagement and improve service delivery. For this reason, the present study focuses on examining how career planning influences employee performance in Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited. The goal is to identify existing gaps and recommend sustainable human resource practices that can enhance both workforce capability and service efficiency.

### **Objective of the Study**

This study examined the effect of career planning on employee performance in Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited in Kenya.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A growing body of empirical research from various organisational settings consistently points to a strong positive link between career planning and employee performance. Career planning not only supports personal development and enhances motivation, but it also helps employees build relevant skills while aligning their goals with those of the organisation, factors that ultimately lead to better performance outcomes. For instance, a study by Osibanjo et al. (2014) in Nigerian private universities found that initiatives such as career counselling and structured career planning significantly boosted performance among both academic and administrative staff. The researchers observed that employees with a clear sense of their

career direction were more focused, motivated, and productive. In a similar study conducted in Indian manufacturing firms, Kumari and Saini (2021) discovered that organisations that actively supported career planning saw tangible benefits, including lower turnover, stronger employee commitment, and measurable improvements in work quality and goal achievement.

Research in the Kenyan context has revealed comparable findings. Mutunga and Gachunga (2013) explored career management practices in the public sector and found a clear positive correlation between career planning and task performance, particularly when supported by mentoring and internal training. However, they also pointed out that the absence of formal career paths in many public institutions often reduces these benefits. Mwanje and Gachunga (2017) investigated Kenya's telecommunications industry and concluded that career planning elements such as succession planning, mentorship, and internal job mobility positively influenced both employee engagement and productivity. Similarly, Mwangi and Gachunga (2016), in their study of Kenyan state corporations, highlighted the importance of linking career development to performance appraisal systems. Their findings showed that organisations that did so experienced significantly improved employee performance.

Internationally, the evidence continues to affirm these trends. In Malaysia, Nawaz and Pangil (2016) found that career planning strategies such as succession planning and career path mapping were strongly associated with both improved employee performance and enhanced organisational citizenship behaviour. Their study also highlighted the need for leadership support to ensure the success of such initiatives. In Pakistan's banking sector, Amin et al. (2014) noted that when employees received clear career guidance and resources for growth, their engagement and performance improved, with many exceeding their job expectations to help achieve organisational goals.

Further evidence from Ghana supports these observations. Boakye and Ampofo (2019) studied the hospitality sector and found that career development programs were linked to increased job satisfaction, better efficiency, and enhanced service delivery. The researchers emphasised the need for clear advancement pathways to foster employee growth and retention. Additional studies reinforce the value of career planning in improving performance. Hassan et al. (2015), working in the Pakistani public sector, found that career planning improved job clarity, reduced workplace stress, and enhanced employee motivation. They emphasised the importance of career counselling and effective leadership in achieving these outcomes. Meanwhile, Sultana et al. (2012) examined Bangladesh's pharmaceutical industry and concluded that career planning, especially when paired with supervision and performance feedback, positively influenced both direct and indirect aspects of employee performance.

In Nigeria, Nduka and Okolie (2020) explored career development among civil servants. Their study revealed that when employees believed career progression was fair and transparent, their commitment and performance increased. However, they also warned that internal politics could undermine these positive effects. In the United Arab Emirates, Alkahtani (2017) studied private sector employees and found a strong link between career planning and both individual and organisational performance. Employees who regularly engaged in goal-setting and career discussions with their supervisors performed better, especially in roles related to customer service and innovation. Finally, a large-scale study by Weng and McElroy (2012) in China shed light on how perceptions of career growth influence job performance. The study identified four dimensions of career growth as career goal progress, skill development, promotion opportunities, and salary progression, all of which were positively related to employee commitment and performance.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a descriptive research design to explore the relationship between career planning and employee performance. A census sampling technique was employed, allowing all employees to participate, with a target population of 150 employees from MUWASCO. The research was conducted at the headquarters of Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited, situated along Mukuyu in Murang'a County. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured questionnaires. The analysis was performed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

version 22 as a research tool. Descriptive statistics were presented in terms of mean and standard deviation. For inferential statistics, a regression analysis model was applied.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Career Planning and Employee Performance

The study sought to establish the extent to which career planning practices influence employee performance in MUWASCO. The variables investigated were career goals, self-assessment, and career opportunities. They were examined, and the findings are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Career Planning and Employee Performance**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
My career goals are consistent with MUWASCO's career development policy.	3.80	1.19
I am content with my current position and have no plans to advance my career.	2.77	1.93
Evaluating my abilities has helped me improve my performance.	3.69	0.31
Self-assessment has helped me identify my strengths and obstacles.	3.57	0.83
Working at MUWASCO provides me with opportunities to advance in my career.	2.26	1.88
Career opportunities at MUWASCO allow me to use my potential and skills.	3.95	1.85
Career planning has enhanced my job satisfaction.	3.72	0.13
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>1.16</b>

According to the results in Table 1, a majority of employees expressed that their career goals align with the organisation's career development policy. Ismail et al. (2016) highlighted that career goals are integral to forming a career identity based on employees' beliefs, aspirations, and skills. Notably, only 2.77% reported satisfaction with their current position, indicating a lack of interest in further career advancement. This dissatisfaction can lead to decreased productivity, which poses a challenge for any organisation.

Employees indicated that self-evaluation has positively impacted their performance, with a mean score of 3.69. They reported that self-assessment helped them identify their strengths and challenges, reflected in a mean score of 3.57 (SD = 0.83). These findings support White's (2005) assertion that self-

assessment enables employees to understand their talents and weaknesses, guiding them in selecting suitable career paths. With a mean score of 2.26 (SD = 1.88), employees felt that working at MUWASCO provides them with opportunities for career advancement. They also agreed that the available career opportunities allow them to utilise their skills effectively, as indicated by a mean score of 3.95 (SD = 1.85). This aligns with research by Maurer and Chapman (2018), which found that awareness of career opportunities positively affects employee behaviour.

Furthermore, employees noted that career planning has led to greater job satisfaction and improved performance, evidenced by a mean score of 3.72 (SD = 0.13). This is in line with a study by Mahmood, Abdul and Badlishah (2021), which



identified a link between human resource management practices and employee performance, highlighting that effective career planning can motivate employees to enhance their performance. Overall, the analysis suggests that the career planning practices implemented at MUWASCO positively influence employee performance. These findings are consistent with Awino and Kipsang (2020), who found a significant positive effect of career planning on employee commitment. Arif (2019) also provided empirical evidence supporting the positive relationship between career planning

and employee performance, stating that such practices motivate employees to achieve high performance levels. Similarly, research by Rizanuddin (2020) further corroborates the significant impact of career planning and development practices on employee performance.

### Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was conducted to determine if career planning predicts employee performance in MUWASCO.

**Table 2: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.354 <sup>a</sup>	.125	.116	1.07494

a. Predictors: (Constant), career planning

Table 2 shows the values of R and R<sup>2</sup> for the model fitted as 0.354 and 0.125, respectively. The R-value of 0.354 portrayed a positive linear relationship between career planning and employee performance

in MUWASCO. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.125 implied that 12.5% of the variation in employee performance was explained by the model  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_2 X_2$ .

**Table 3: ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.632	4	2.408	2.327	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	130.979	122	1.073		
	Total	140.611	126			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Career Planning

An ANOVA was carried out, which, as from Table 3, showed the F-statistic p-value of 0.008. Since the p-value of the F-statistic was less than 0.05, it

implied that considering the simple regression model fitted above, career planning had a significant effect on employee performance in MUWASCO.

**Table 4: Regression Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1	(Constant)	2.032	.454		4.246	.000
	Career Planning	.348	.114	.354	3.063	.008

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

The results of the coefficients in the model  $Y = 2.032 + 0.348X_2$  indicated that career planning is statistically significant at the 0.05 level of

significance, as shown in Table 4. This was because the p-value of 0.008 was less than 0.05. The constant term implied that at zero consideration of

career planning, employee performance would be at 2.032, increasing the career planning parameters would increase the employee performance by 0.348. Past studies have consistently indicated that when employees are actively involved in planning their careers, their motivation, job satisfaction, and overall productivity tend to improve significantly (Kumari & Saini, 2021; Nduka & Okolie, 2020). Further, employees who engage in career planning exhibit clearer goals and a higher commitment to achieving organisational objectives, which boosts performance (Alkahtani, 2017). Career planning not only provides direction to individual career growth but also serves as a mechanism for identifying skill gaps, which in turn improves job performance through targeted development efforts. Employees with well-structured career paths report higher work engagement and deliver more consistent performance outcomes.

## CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The regression analysis indicated that career planning practices have a strong positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance at MUWASCO. Specifically, the results revealed that a one-unit increase in career planning was associated with a 0.0258-unit improvement in employee performance. This aligns with Arif's (2019) research, which also found a significant impact of career planning on employee performance. Additionally, the study identified self-assessment and career opportunities as key factors in effective career planning. Theoretically, this research enriches the discourse on employee performance by integrating career planning in a developing country context. Practically, it provides human resource managers with actionable strategies to improve employee performance. However, it was noted that employee satisfaction with their current positions posed a concern. Overall, the findings confirm a statistically significant relationship between career planning and employee performance.

## Recommendations of the Study

The study recommends that organisations should allocate more resources to skills development and also provide incentives to encourage employee participation in development programs. Organisations should establish clear career guidance policies, organise regular seminars, mentorship programs, and conferences to further enhance employee performance. Additionally, organisations should host internal conferences and support employees in attending relevant seminars, workshops, and conferences. This will expose employees to new challenges and keep them up with advanced technologies, ultimately enhancing their skills and competencies. Further, it will boost employee engagement, motivation, support career growth, succession planning, improve organisational adaptability and foster innovation and problem-solving.

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