



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKFORCE PLANNING PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED COUNTY GOVERNMENT PUBLIC SERVICE IN SOUTH RIFT, KENYA

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Abstract:

Workforce planning ensures that organizations have the right resources to achieve their strategy. In the public sector, particularly in County Governments, the need for effective workforce planning has become increasingly essential due to frequent leadership transitions, retirements, and evolving service delivery demands. This study sought to assess the relationship between workforce planning practice and the performance of selected County Government Public Service in the South Rift, Kenya. The study adopted a correlational research design and was undertaken in selected County Public Services in the South Rift region. The target population was 258 employees who comprised Heads of Departments, Heads of Sections and Specialized Staff, where a sample size of 157 respondents was used. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, and to ensure its validity, the instrument was given to experts in human resources to check its content. County governments' public service should enhance reward systems, strengthen succession planning frameworks, and improve performance management practices to sustain employee commitment and achieve higher levels of service delivery. The overall mean score of 2.44, with a standard deviation of 1.32, indicates that respondents generally agreed that workforce planning contributes to county government performance, although the level of agreement varies across the individual dimensions. The findings inform policymaking in relation to succession planning and performance in the County Government Public Service.

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1. Introduction

Workforce planning is a systematic process designed to identify and address gaps in today's workforce by generating information, analyzing it to inform future demand for people and skills, and translating that into a set of actions that will develop and build on the existing workforce to meet that demand (Roberthalf, 2022). This entails: understanding the organisation and the operating environment; analysing the workforce by identifying and analysing knowledge, skills, abilities and talent profiles, as well as attrition rates and other factors such as employees' views on job security, satisfaction and intention to leave; identifying future skills and capabilities, and predicting the timeframes involved through scenario planning; identifying gaps in workforce skills and knowledge; developing an action plan that has functional, numerical and adaptation flexibility and monitoring and evaluating action plans and solutions (Deloitte, 2022).

According to Adele (2016), workforce planning ensures that organizations have the right resources to achieve their strategy. It is a continuous process that helps organizations develop and implement operational and strategic interventions to mitigate short-term and long-term workforce risks. This helps organizations respond to current challenges and anticipate future ones by applying evidence-based workforce decision-making. It also helps organizations generate insights into their current and future workforce needs and risks arising from workforce capacity or capability gaps.

High demand for labour due to the reduced size of the workforce and the limited elasticity of labour-force, will be a more pressing issue for the County Government Public Service in the short and medium term than the financial dimension (Skelton, Natress & Dwyer, 2020). Across countries, skill gaps are most frequently identified in technical skills (46% of firms facing skill gaps), problem-solving skills (34%) and teamwork skills (33%) OECD (2024).

Bajwa, Geobey, Weber and Wood (2024) discovered that staff habits have a substantial effect on businesses' environmental and social performance. Akpan, Okebaram and Pimaro (2023) studied the effect of workforce planning and performance in Selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State and found that workforce planning has a significant influence on the employee performance of selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State and that there is a positive relationship between workforce planning and performance of selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. A county Public Service study is required to determine the connection between workforce planning and performance.

Kenyan County Governments have been in place for three to five years following the 2010 adoption of the constitution. Nonetheless, the County Government system is still in the process of developing laws that would help to raise employee performance (Nyanjom & Naylor, 2021). The majority of employees are frequently impacted when newly elected leaders take office due to the elective position at the top, which has been seen to have an effect on employees' performance in county governments.

According to the Retirement Benefits Authority (2024), about one quarter of Kenyans over 55 years of age cannot proceed to retire as planned, and this can cause demotivation, hence increasing the rates of absenteeism and consequently decreasing their productivity levels (Taylor & Earl, 2016). Organizations therefore need to optimize staffing for greater efficiency and reliability by getting a clear and credible roadmap to effectiveness (Solomon Associates, 2025). According to the Capacity Assessment and Rationalization of the Public Service (CARPS) Report and the HR Audit Task Force Report, 2022, county public service lacks an organized system for recruiting, retaining, and developing individuals with the aptitude and abilities to meet the public service's present and future needs.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Counties in Kenya have made significant efforts to implement policy reforms aimed at strengthening capacity building and leadership development within devolved units. However, many counties continue to experience challenges such as high employee turnover, weak institutional memory, and inconsistent service delivery. According to the Directorate of Public Service Management (2020), the County Public Service has an aging workforce, with approximately 47% of employees expected to retire within the next ten years. This situation presents a significant challenge, as the retirement of experienced employees may result in the loss of essential competencies and institutional knowledge, particularly in the absence of clear and effective career development policies. The continued retention or re-engagement of some county officials beyond the statutory retirement age through contract arrangements further highlights weaknesses in workforce planning and succession management. Previous studies have reported mixed findings regarding the relationship between workforce planning practices and organizational performance. Moreover, most of these studies were conducted in different geographical locations, employed diverse methodological approaches, and examined different institutional contexts. These variations create a contextual and empirical gap that this study sought to address by examining the relationship between workforce planning practices and the performance of selected County Public Services in the South Rift region of Kenya. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of effective workforce policies and strategies that promote sustained employee performance, strengthen institutional continuity, and enhance the provision of quality public services to citizens.

2. Literature Review

Bajwa, Geobey, Weber and Wood (2024) investigated how workforce behaviors affect companies' social and environmental performance. A sample of 224 sizable, actively traded Canadian companies listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) provided information via the Refinitiv database. The effect of different worker practices on businesses' environmental and social performance was examined using a linear

regression model. The results have significant ramifications for how workforce policies affect companies' social and environmental performance, both directly and indirectly. The workforce-environment/social performance relationship was found to be fully mediated by enterprises' financial performance; however, the direct influence was found to be significant. The results also showed that personnel practices and environmental/social performance were significantly impacted by business age through financial success. Since this study was conducted in a different region, a study in the Kenyan setting is necessary to determine the connection between workforce planning and public service performance.

Akpan, Okebaram and Pimaro (2023) studied the effect of workforce planning and performance in Selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. To gather information from respondents, the study used a survey approach and both primary and secondary sources of data. The sample size was 119 respondents, and the target population was 170 respondents from eight chosen SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. The study discovered a favorable correlation between workforce planning and the performance of specific SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, as well as a substantial effect on the employee performance of those SMEs. This study employed a correlation research strategy to determine the relationship between workforce planning practice and county public service performance so that the results can be compared; this is necessary because the previous study utilized a survey research design and was conducted in SMEs.

3. Research Design

The study adopted a correlation research methodology. The design sought to answer questions like what, who, and how of a phenomenon in a study (Ogula, 2015). Gaining understanding of the current phenomena in connection to circumstances, procedures, and relationships was the goal. The design enabled the researcher to establish facts; examine relationships; describe, analyze and interpret data accordingly (Siedlecki, 2020). The study was undertaken in the County Public Service in selected Counties in the South Rift region. These counties were Bomet, Kericho and Narok County Governments since they face similar challenges regarding the need for better career development policies and talent retention programs. The counties have high rates of retirement, which creates significant gaps in leadership and slow replacement of senior vacant positions, causing service disruption.

The target population comprised 78 HODs, 89 HOS, and 91 specialized staff of selected counties in South Rift, where a sample of 157 respondents was used. The respondents were stratified into HODs, heads of Sections and Specialized staff. The researcher used a stratified sampling design, which was suitable to serve the sampled respondents.

This study employed a self-administered structured questionnaire as the data-gathering tool. According to Kinyanjui (2014), a self-administered structured questionnaire is used to collect both quantitative and qualitative strands. The

questionnaire takes the format of a five-point Likert scale of 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree, as recommended by Bryman & Bell (2015).

4. Findings

The study sought to determine the relationship between workforce planning practice and the performance of selected County Government Public Service in South Rift. Respondents were asked to respond to the workforce planning practice statements, and their responses were on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 was Strongly Disagree, 2 was Disagree, 3 was Undecided, 4 was Agree and 5 was Strongly Agree. A mean of between 0.0 and 2.5 meant strongly disagreed, while a mean of between 2.6 and 5.0 meant strongly agreed. The results are as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Workforce Planning Practice and Performance

Workforce planning and Performance of County Government Public Service	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Workforce planning done by my county government ensures that the right human resources are available to achieve the county strategy plan.	60 (39.1%)	48 (31.8%)	5 (3.3%)	28 (18.5%)	10 (6.6%)	2.20	1.32
County government analyses its workforce so as to identify knowledge, skills, abilities and talent profiles for the sustainability of county operations	39 (25.8%)	75 (49.7%)	6 (4.0%)	16 (10.6%)	15 (9.9%)	2.29	1.24
County government analyze, and interprets employee data so as to identify trends, gaps, and areas for improvement,	33 (21.9%)	34 (22.5%)	7 (4.6%)	48 (31.8%)	29 (19.2%)	3.04	1.48
Gap analysis done by county government informs recruitment, training and the direct and indirect impacts of the county workforce	34 (22.5%)	65 (43.0%)	9 (6.0%)	27 (17.9%)	16 (10.6%)	2.51	1.31
Workforce planning enables the county government to plan for future workforce demands and align them with county government plan on performance	58 (38.4%)	55 (36.4%)	10 (6.6%)	13 (8.6%)	15 (9.9%)	2.15	1.23
Average						2.44	1.32

Source: Field Data (2026).

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 present respondents' responses on workforce planning practices and their contribution to performance in the County Government Public Service. The findings indicate that 108 respondents (70.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that workforce planning ensures the availability of appropriate human resources required to achieve county strategic plans. Only 38 respondents (25.1%) agreed

or strongly agreed, while 5 respondents (3.3%) were undecided. The findings indicate that respondents generally perceive workforce planning practices in the County Government Public Service as weak.

The statement workforce planning ensures the availability of appropriate human resources required to achieve county strategic plans recorded a mean score of 2.20 ($SD = 1.32$), indicating that respondents largely disagreed that workforce planning ensures the availability of the right human resources required to achieve county strategic plans. These findings suggest that most respondents perceive workforce planning practices as inadequate in aligning human resource availability with county strategic objectives. This contradicts Adele (2016), who noted that workforce planning ensures that organizations have the right resources to achieve their organizational strategy. There is a need for county public service to continuously plan for its workforce and implement operational and strategic interventions to mitigate short-term and long-term workforce risks.

The results show that 114 respondents (75.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the county government conducts effective workforce analysis to identify employee knowledge, skills, abilities, and talent profiles. Only 31 respondents (20.5%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 6 respondents (4.0%) were undecided. This indicates that workforce analysis and skills profiling are perceived to be insufficient within the county public service. The statement on workforce analysis for identifying employees' knowledge, skills, abilities, and talent profiles recorded a mean of 2.29 ($SD = 1.24$). This suggests that respondents do not perceive workforce analysis as an adequately implemented practice for supporting sustainability. This contradicts Roberthalf (2022), who noted that workforce planning entails analyzing the workforce to identify and address gaps by generating information which informs future demand for people and skills, and translating that into a set of actions that will develop and build on the existing workforce to meet the organizational demand.

The findings reveal a relatively mixed perception. A total of 77 respondents (51.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that employee data is analyzed to identify trends, workforce gaps, and improvement areas, while 67 respondents (44.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. 7 respondents (4.6%) were undecided. These results suggest that although some respondents recognize the use of workforce data analysis, a significant proportion believe that such practices are not consistently implemented.

The analysis of employee data to identify workforce trends, gaps, and improvement areas recorded the highest mean score among the reported items ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.48$). This indicates a more neutral perception, suggesting that while some respondents believe the county government uses workforce data analysis, others disagree. The relatively high standard deviation shows considerable variation in respondents' views. This concurs with Roberthalf (2022), who established that workforce analysis inform on future demand for people and skills and translates that into a set of actions that will develop and build on the existing organizational workforce.

The findings indicate that 99 respondents (65.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that workforce gap analysis informs recruitment, training, and other workforce decisions.

Only 43 respondents (28.5%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 9 respondents (6.0%) were undecided. This suggests that workforce gap analysis is perceived as weak and may not be effectively guiding human resource planning decisions.

The statement on workforce gap analysis informing recruitment and training decisions recorded a mean of 2.51 and a standard deviation of 1.31, indicating that respondents generally disagree that workforce gap analysis is effectively used to guide human resource decisions. This contradicts Ifechukwu and Ifeyinwa (2025), who established that employees need to have the skills and information needed to carry out their jobs well; hence, organizations should offer job shadowing opportunities and structured training programs for all their employees.

The findings show that 113 respondents (74.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that workforce planning enables the county government to anticipate future workforce needs and align them with performance objectives. Only 28 respondents (18.5%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 10 respondents (6.6%) were undecided. These results indicate that respondents perceive workforce planning as inadequate in supporting future workforce preparedness and performance management.

The findings indicate that respondents generally disagreed that workforce planning enables the county government to effectively plan for future workforce demands and align them with performance objectives. The statement recorded a mean score of 2.15 (SD = 1.23), which is below the midpoint of the five-point Likert scale. The standard deviation of 1.23 indicates a moderate variation in respondents' opinions, suggesting that while the majority expressed disagreement, some respondents may perceive workforce planning practices as being more effective. County government should therefore identify and address gaps in its workforce by generating information so as to inform future demand for people and skills required to build on the existing workforce for future organizational needs (Roberthalf, 2022).

The overall mean of 2.44 (SD = 1.32) therefore suggests a generally positive perception of workforce planning, but with some inconsistency in how systematically workforce information is analysed and applied to management decisions.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings indicate that respondents hold predominantly negative perceptions regarding workforce planning practices in the County Government Public Service. The majority of respondents reported that workforce planning does not effectively ensure the availability of appropriate human resources, identify workforce skills and talent profiles, conduct workforce gap analysis, or support future workforce demands.

Although some respondents acknowledged that employee data analysis is undertaken to identify trends and areas for improvement, the overall findings suggest that workforce planning practices are not sufficiently integrated into strategic human resource management and performance improvement. These findings imply that county governments need to strengthen workforce forecasting, employee skills assessment,

workforce analytics, and gap analysis to ensure that human resources are strategically aligned with service delivery objectives.

The descriptive analysis demonstrates that workforce planning practices within the County Government Public Service are perceived as inadequate. Respondents largely indicated that workforce planning does not effectively support strategic human resource allocation, workforce analysis, succession preparation, or future workforce requirements.

This suggests that employees perceive weaknesses in the county government's ability to forecast future workforce requirements and strategically align human resource needs with performance plans. The finding implies that workforce planning processes may not be sufficiently forward-looking, resulting in possible gaps between workforce availability, employee competencies, and the county government's strategic objectives.

The overall mean scores suggest that workforce planning practices are not strongly embedded within the County Government Public Service. Respondents generally perceive weaknesses in workforce forecasting, skills identification, workforce gap analysis, and alignment of human resources with strategic objectives. The exception is workforce data analysis, where respondents expressed mixed opinions, suggesting some level of implementation but inconsistent application.

The study concludes that workforce planning contributes positively to the performance of county government public services. Effective workforce planning ensures the availability of adequate and appropriate human resources, facilitates the identification of essential skills and talents required for effective service delivery, and enables county governments to anticipate future workforce needs. The study therefore recommends that county public service departments strengthen the use of workforce analytics to identify workforce trends, address skills gaps, and pinpoint areas requiring improvement, thereby enhancing workforce effectiveness and overall service delivery.

The study recommends that county governments should enhance workforce planning systems through improved workforce forecasting, data-driven human resource decisions, skills gap analysis, and alignment of workforce plans with strategic objectives. The finding indicates that workforce planning practices are not adequately implemented within the County Government Public Service; hence, effective workforce planning is required by anticipating future staffing needs, identifying competency gaps, and aligning workforce capabilities with strategic goals. The county governments need to strengthen workforce forecasting, workforce analytics, and strategic human resource planning to improve performance.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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