

# Effect of Career Development Practices on Employee Performance: a Case of Employees In Selected Private Universities in Nairobi County, Kenya

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## Abstract

From the employees' perspective, the lack of career guidance can lead to frustration, feelings of not being appreciated by the company and not identifying the right position leads to the need of a job change and / or the company. This is particularly more pronounced in such settings as universities, where employee performance determines the quality of graduates who are likely to be placed in positions of important decision making in their professional endeavors. It is more so more important in private universities where employees do not have the kind of job security as is the case in public universities. It is under this background that the study set out to investigate the effects of career guidance on employee performance in Kenyan private universities, with a particular interest in the religious based Private Universities in Kenya. This was a descriptive study design targeting the employees of religious based private universities in Kenya which included Daystar, CUEA, St. Pauls and KeMU and totaled 2336. The established sample size was 341. The main data collection tool was questionnaires, from which the obtained quantitative data was analyzed by both descriptive and inferential analyses. Results indicate that career guidance is a significant predictor of employee performance ( $\beta = .204, p < 0.05$ ). It is concluded that career guidance as regards counseling and mentorship is inadequately practiced across a majority of the institutions surveyed. There is need for the study area and similar institutions to introduce policies that will enhance career growth opportunities especially for employees.

**Key Words:** Career Guidance, Employee Performance, Career Development

## 1.0 Introduction

Developing employees' careers at all levels of organization is important both to the individual officers who serve in various departments and to those in the management hierarchy who must develop policies and institute practices that govern and guide such career development (McMullen, 2003; Lawer, 2017; Mankoe, 2017). It is the goal of all quality organizations to provide their employees superior opportunities to grow, both individually and as professionals, since there are manifest relationships between characteristics of career development and individual employee efficiency, which arise from organizational, individual, or extraneous attributes (Akinade, Sokan & Osarenren, 2016). A great amount of worldwide wealth occurs in a form of human capital; therefore managing human resources plays a crucial role in a process of increasing employees' effectiveness (Edwards & Quinter, 2017; Fruehling, 2018). This study will seek to show the effect career development processes on the general levels of professional performance of employees in a highly respected private higher educational institution.

Career development practice involves all of the technical and managerial skills employees acquire to develop in achieving growth in their career (Jones & Larke, 2017). Moreover, it is the method used to give new or present employees the skills they need to perform their current job and often focuses on the immediate period to help fit any current deficit in employee's skills (Kankam & Onivehu, 2017). According to Merchant (1995) the component of a career development program encompasses proficiency, in-service training and career specialty training and provides employees with the opportunity to enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform jobs beyond the minimum level (Kelly-Plate & Volz-Patten, 2018).

Career development process contributes to organizational development. For both processes to take place at a higher pace, organizational commitment is a requisite that ensures the continuity of the efforts (Issa & Nwalo, 2015). Such a commitment depends on an individual's loyalty to the organization, and on their motivational levels that could result from that organization's commitment to the individual's career development (Lawer, 2017). This will ensure long-term association of individuals to the organizations for which they work. On the other hand, this long-term association requires commitment from both the individual and the organization (Merchant, 1995).

Nevertheless, career development, in the context of this study, plays a major role in improving organizational efficiency and employment development (Zunker, 2018). In a dichotomy, career development will involve career guidance, in which counseling helps in defining clear career goals and creating career plans within the context of organizational realities (Zimbardo & Weber, 2016). High job turnover, complaints and disciplinary issues, retention of low promotion talent and competency issues are symptomatic of the need for career guidance programs. Such programs enable a deeper focus on an employee's aims and aspirations from identification of the handicaps faced by an employee in accomplishing his goals to the solutions in terms of re-skilling or reassignment (Armstrong, 2010). This focus acts as the significant motivator for an employee to excel and exceed the targets. Career guidance is especially even more basic in modern Total Quality Management (TQM) and performance-oriented Operations Management (OM) due to the importance of job specialization and proficiency indexing. It facilitates powerful personal and professional development (Paplampu, 2018).

Career guidance is therefore a continuous process (Obour, 2017). According to Armstrong (2010), there is always a commitment of the top leadership towards such programs as they see long-term value addition to the organization. A large number of employees have the opportunity to change jobs, but it is imperative for professional organizations that are in business from a long-term perspective to have suitable career management. In fact, the lack of it has negative impact on productivity (Lawer, 2017). Most professionals leave an organization due to lack of career guidance (Armstrong, 2010). Active career guidance initiatives by a company are a key retention tool to keep the best talent within its fold. It is one of the greatest motivators to keep an employee happy and engaged. The question would be whether career guidance of employees actually makes a difference to the performance of a worker (Kidd, 2016; Kelly-Plate & Volz-Patten, 2018).

In the organizational context, performance is usually defined as the extent to which an organizational member contributes to achieving the goals of the organization (Trauth et al., 2018). Employee's performance is measured against the performance standards set by the organization. Good performance means how well employees performed on the assigned and when they perform up to the set standards and meet organizational expectations, they are believed good performers (Mankoe, 2017). Awareness of individuals about their career presumably indicates that individuals are able to plan the process effectively and at the same time are able to relate it to organizational development goals (Manyasi et al., 2013). Proper planning and management of human resources within organizations is essential to increase the capabilities, motivation, and overall effectiveness of employees' hence organizational performance (Aquinas, 2006). From the company perspective, the failure to motivate the employees by guiding their careers can lead to hinder the process of filling vacant posts, a decrease of the staff involvement and an inappropriate use of the money allocated to training and development programs. From the employees' perspective, the lack of career guiding can lead to frustration, feelings of not being appreciated by the company and not identifying the right position leads to the need of a job change and / or the company (Paplampu, 2018). This is particularly more pronounced in such settings as universities, where employee performance determines the quality of graduates who are likely to be placed in positions of important decision making in their professional endeavors. It is more so more important in private universities where employees do not have the kind of job security as is the case in public universities.

Private universities in Kenya fall into three categories; chartered (University of Eastern Africa-Baraton [UEAB], Catholic University of Eastern Africa [CUEA], Daystar University, Scott Theological College, United States International University [USIU], and African Nazarene University [ANU], Kenya Methodist

University [KEMU], St Paul's University - Limuru); registered (East African School of Theology, Kenya Highlands Bible College, Nairobi International School of Theology, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, and Pan-African Christian College) and those operating on letters of interim authority (Aga Khan University, Strathmore University, Kabarak University and Kiriri Women's University of Science and Technology) (Commission for Higher Education 2007).

Most of the private universities in Kenya are established and run by religious organisations. As at the time of the study, 7 out of the 8 private chartered universities were sponsored and managed by Christian organisations. All the five registered universities are sponsored and managed by Christian organisations. Most of the Christian-sponsored private universities started by offering courses mainly geared towards training church ministers. Nguru (1990) observes that the major aim of these church-affiliated private universities is the same as it was with the earlier missionary schools, namely, to promote the spread of the Christian gospel. However, these religious sponsored universities have expanded their programmes to include secular courses in the social and natural sciences.

In the education sector both locally and globally, career development has become significant and tends to depend on the versatility of the service staff to adjust to ever-rising higher academic and professional demands. This aspect needs to be well understood since the ideal scenario would be where clientele gets knowledge-based or specialized services. The performance image of the entire organization depends on the robust output of both the user and the service provider, since the quality of such a service and the quality of the workforce has umbilical ties to the quality of the organization as well as the quality of the client. However, a gap exists where such ideals are yet to be realized in local institutions of higher learning. With such high standards to meet, university staff is increasingly looking for university education. It is under this background that the study set out to investigate the effects of career guidance on employee performance in Kenyan private universities, with a particular interest in the religious based Private Universities in Kenya.

The existing studies in this relation (Kidd, 2016; Lawer, 2017; Trauth et al., 2018; Harvey 2002; Harvey, Matt & Milord 2002; Jackson 2002; Kamoche 2002; Kamoche, Debrah, Hortwiz & Muuka 2004; Kraak 2005) have taken a general human resource management (HRM) focus as well as studies carried out in Kenya by Shitama, (2011), Bosibori et al., (2012) and Carol Onduma (2013) reveal that HR practices have a positive and statistically significant relationship with performance. However, these studies have focused on HRM functions of creating a gap on issues such as the effect of career guidance on employee performance.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

Career Development in this study is largely part of career management that is a joint responsibility between the individual and the organization that employs them. It is concisely defined in many texts as an effort to improve job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Organizational commitment relates positively to job satisfaction and employee performance when employee needs and values are, in all cases, considered and met. Employee aspirations, needs, values, and career goals therefore need to be articulated and well understood to sustain the relationship (Hameed and Waheed, 2011; Hedge et al, 2006; Kellet et al, 2009; Merchant Jt 1995).

The indicators of employee performance are in review largely linked to job satisfaction levels and organizational commitment, and these are in turn juxtaposed analytically to individual characteristics that include age, gender, level of supported and unsupported education, length of service, job cadre, area of specialization, and the available individual career paths in different organizations. Several theorists made great contributions to the question of career guidance and its relationship to employee performance. These include Donald Super's Theory of Vocational Choice and Edwin Locke's Goal-Setting Theory.

Azmi, Ahmad, Zainuddin (2017) found that positive relationships exist between competency-based career development practice and all service quality dimensions found in the Malaysian public organizations. Kahya, Othman, Meruda (2014) found in their study that career development processes are important factors in determining individual performance of salespeople, in which the dependent variable, individual performance was measured in terms of the outcomes or output or sales produced on a specified job function

or activity during a specified period of time. Harrington and Harrigan (2016) in their article titled “Practice and Research in Career Counseling and Development” acknowledged that career field is large, diverse and specialized. The research was done in Boston, United States of America. The authors summarized and discussed implications of the findings for career counselling practice and research. The findings were that childhood is a vital stage in career development and therefore should not be overlooked. Data was obtained on 100 police officers who resigned in the period between October 1983 and April 1995. There was significant relationship between career management, employee satisfaction, development of promotable employees and lower turnover.

Guichard and Lenz (2015), in their article titled “Career Theory from an International Perspective” highlighted seven approaches which include action theory, self-construction model, transition model, dynamics of entering the workforce, narrative in career guidance, dilemma approach, and interactive identity construction. Three main characteristics appear to be common to these different contributions which are emphasis on contexts and cultural diversities, self-construction or development emphasis, and constructive perspective. Career theory provides a foundation for personal and career development interventions. These interventions help people find answers to personal and career development questions that stem from the social context in which they live. The findings were that today’s industrialized societies are individualist ones. In these societies, two major factors play an important role in the evolution of career counselling. The questions that society submits to individuals regarding their fundamental life choices are likely to differ significantly in individualistic and collectivist societies.

Trauth et al. (2018) found in their study that effective alignment of employee goals to organizational objectives and a successful career development process has two particularly important results; that employees can continually develop not just any skills but those competencies needed by the organization to succeed; and that increased engagement is a key factor in ensuring high levels of productivity, retention, and performance. The study highlights the value of including career development as a vital part of organizational strategy. Marinka (2016), in the article “Career Competencies for Career Success” addresses the general question as to which competencies employees need to possess in order to engage in self-management in their career development. The authors distinguished and operationalized six career factors and competencies of self-management in career development. A quantitative study was performed using 1,579 employees in 16 Dutch companies to investigate the relationship between career competencies and career success. The findings indicated that career control and networking are strongly associated with career success. Organizations should facilitate their employees’ career actualizations.

According to Paplambu (2018), career development is a field that is becoming increasingly relevant to both employees and employers. Economic and technological developments have resulted in working careers becoming more unpredictable due to changing work opportunities and shifts in labor. A permanent job with one employer, preferably for the entire span of a person’s working life, can no longer be considered the normal work pattern. At present, career opportunities tend to be seen in light of employability. It was concluded that career development frequently goes beyond the boundaries of one organization. The notion of traditional career, chiefly determined by an employee’s preliminary training and by opportunities provided by employers, has shifted to the concept of changing career, largely guided by the employee himself or herself. The change towards self-management in career development fuels interest in the personal dispositions that could explain why this type of self-management goes well for some people, but not for others.

### **3.1 Research Methodology**

This was a descriptive study designed to gather data from senior administrative managers, academic staff, library staff, accountants, administrative officers, and technical staff that would describe the effects of career development on employee performance in private universities. Since the category of staff are in different grades and have different responsibilities and duties, the researcher used stratified sampling technique and purposive sampling technique. Descriptive research design was preferred because it obtains current information on the case study. It also describes the dependent variable in relation to the independent

variables. This type of research design is good because it shows the relationship existing between two or more variables.

The population of this study was all the employees of religious based private universities in Kenya which included Daystar, CUEA, St. Pauls and KeMU and totaled 2336. These included both Academic staff and non-teaching staff.

**Table 1 Target Population**

University	Population	Percentage Proportion
Daystar	488	20.9
CUEA	596	25.5
St. Pauls	612	26.2
KeMU	640	27.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2336</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Respective Universities (2016)

Owing to the large number of the target population, the following formula developed by Fisher (1983) was employed in arriving at a desired sample.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + (N * e^2)}$$

Where;

N= population size

e= Tolerance at desired level of confidence, take 0.05 at 95% confidence level

n= sample size.

The sample size was therefore arrived at as follows:

$$n = 2336 / (1 + (2336 * 0.05 * 0.05))$$

$$n = 341.52$$

Thus, the sample size was:

$$n = 341$$

The study further employed proportionate stratified sampling design in reaching respondents across the different universities according to the respective percentage proportions using the formula below:

$$S = XS / P$$

Where:

$$\text{Daystar: } (488 / 2336) \times 341 = 71$$

$$\text{CUEA: } (596 / 2336) \times 341 = 87$$

$$\text{St. Pauls: } (612 / 2336) \times 341 = 89$$

$$\text{KeMU: } (640 / 2336) \times 341 = 93$$

**Table 2: Sample Size by University**

University	Population	Sample
Daystar	488	71
CUEA	596	87
St. Pauls	612	89
KeMU	640	93
<b>Total</b>	<b>2336</b>	<b>341</b>

Source: Author (2017)

Respondents were then reached across various departments whereby proportionate stratified sampling design was employed as tabulated below:

**Table 3: Sample Size by Department**

Strata	Total Population	% (Proportion)	Sample Size
Senior Administrative Managers	110	4.7	14
Academic Staff	1095	46.9	140
Librarians	183	7.8	27
Accountants	146	6.3	21
Administrative Officers	511	21.9	75
Technical Staff	292	12.5	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>2336</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>341</b>

Source: Author (2017)

The sample proportions were then used to distribute respondents in the various universities across the strata that is job categories as shown in Table 4.

Example:

$$\text{Senior Administrative Managers/Daystar} = (4.7 / 100) \times 71 = 3$$

**Table 4: Sample Size by University and Department**

Strata	Daystar	CUEA	St. Pauls	KeMU	Total
Senior Administrative Managers	3	4	4	4	14
Academic Staff	33	41	42	44	140
Librarians	6	7	7	7	27
Accountants	4	5	6	6	21
Administrative Officers	16	19	19	20	75
Technical Staff	9	11	11	12	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>341</b>

Source: Author (2017)

In this study the main data collection tool was questionnaires. Primary data was used in the proposed study. Primary data was obtained by issuance of questionnaires that will be filled then collected. The questionnaires included both open ended and closed questions. The questionnaire used to collect primary data was pre-tested to determine its clarity, validity and reliability. Clarification was offered to those who encounter difficulties in filling the questionnaires. The Likert scale items were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha for reliability and validity tests (Collins & Hussey, 2007).

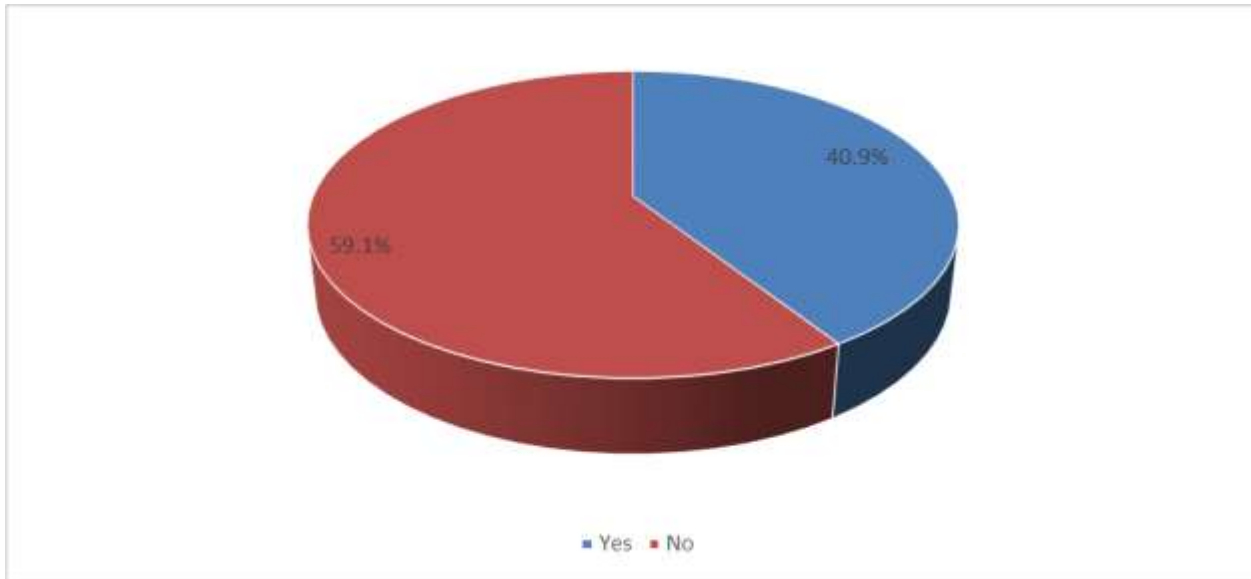
Data was collected, and checked for completeness, coded and tabulated. A mix of descriptive and inferential analyses were then used. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze quantitative data. This included means, standard deviation, relative frequencies and percentages, (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Inferential analysis included both Pearson correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. Whereas Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the linear association between career development practices and employee performance in Private Universities in Kenya, multiple regression analysis was applied to determine the effect of career development practices on employee performance in Private Universities in Kenya, and therefore to test the research hypotheses. The model to test for correlation is as follows;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta X + \varepsilon$$

Where Y is the dependent variable (Employee Performance),  $\beta_0$  is the regression constant,  $\beta$  is the coefficient of independent variables, X is career guidance.  $\varepsilon$  is the error term associated with the regression model.

#### 4.0 Results

The study sought to examine the effect of career guidance on employee performance in Kenyan private universities. This section presents findings to pertinent questions asked in this regard. Responses were given in form of both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and Likert scale. Respondents were first asked to indicate whether or not their respective universities have a career guidance program for the employees. Findings are as shown in figure 1 below.



**Figure 1 Career Guidance Programs**

*Source: Survey Data, 2016*

As illustrated in figure 1, a majority of respondents (59.1%) dissented on whether their respective universities have a career guidance program for their employees, while 40.9% affirmed. It follows from the finding that a majority of the institutions reached do not have clear career guidance program for the development of their employees. This is of the implication that these employees lack a clear career development path in their present work stations and may thus be demotivation to perform to their best. It is as such important that these institutions set up career guidance programs to enable their employees perform to the best of their respective abilities.

Respondents were then asked to indicate their levels of agreement with pertinent statements posed with a view to establish assess career guidance in respective institutions surveyed. Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale (where 1= Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree). The scores of ‘Strongly Disagree’ and ‘Disagree’ have been taken to represent a statement disagreed with by a majority of respondents, equivalent to mean score of 0 to 2.5. The score of ‘Neutral’ has been taken to represent a statement affirmed to moderately, equivalent to a mean score of 2.6 to 3.4. The score of ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ have been taken to represent a statement highly agreed with by a majority of respondents, equivalent to a mean score of 3.5 to 5.4. Table 4.7 below presents the findings.

**Table 4 Career Guidance**

	Mean	Std. Dev
My employer provides counseling at the work place	3.034	.9915
My employer has allocated a mentor to help me advance my career	2.157	.8762
There is a role model at the work place to help me enhance my career	3.492	.6436

*Source: Survey Data, 2016*

As presented in table 4.7, a majority of respondents only moderately agreed that their employer provides counseling at the work place (3.034); their employer has allocated a mentor to help them advance my career (2.157); and that there is a role model at the work place to help me enhance my career (3.492). It can thus be deduced from the foregoing finding that career guidance as regards counseling and mentorship is inadequately practiced across a majority of the institutions surveyed.

The finding is in tandem with Beardwell, Holden and Claydon (2004) who observe that effective management development should give due consideration to career paths and opportunities for promotion and progression. Today, due to rapid changes in organizations, as organizations are delayered, there is a great deal of uncertainty and no clearly defined progression paths. Promotion is no longer automatic as was the case in the structures and cultures of traditional organizations. Accordingly, Torrington and Hall (1995) attribute the decreasing opportunities for much desired upward promotion to organizational delayering and further point out that in the longer term, constant change and reshaping in organizations turn career planning into an exercise in futility.

#### 4.5 Inferential Statistics

The researcher used regression analysis to test the correlation between the dependent and the independent variable. The model to test for correlation was as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta X + \varepsilon$$

Where Y is the dependent variable (Employee Performance),  $\beta_0$  is the regression constant,  $\beta$  is the coefficients of independent variables.  $\varepsilon$  is the error term associated with the regression model. Table 5 below presents the results.

**Table 5: Regression Analysis Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.204 <sup>a</sup>	.041	.038	2.52434

a. Predictors: (Constant), Career guidance

#### ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	69.393	1	69.393	10.890	.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1605.824	252	6.372		
	Total	1675.217	253			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Career guidance

#### Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.165	5.370		.776	.439
	Career guidance	.524	.159	.204	3.300	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

The findings in Table 5 shows that the predictor variable (Career guidance) is a significant predictor of employee performance (Y) F (10.890) =.204, p<0.001 as shown in ANOVA with R<sup>2</sup> =.041 (Model summary). This implies that all the independent variables studied jointly explain 4.1% variations in the dependent variable (employee performance). The rest (95.9%) can be explained by other variables not included in this study (error term).



From the regression coefficients, the model, constant (4.165) is the predicted value of Y (Employee performance) when all predictor variables are zero. The original regression model was  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta X + \epsilon$ . The fitted model equation as per coefficients was;

$Y$  (Employee performance) = 4.165 + .204 $X_1$ . Where  $X$  = Career guidance

The model equation shows that employee performance would increase by .204 units with a single unit increase in Career guidance.

## 5.1 Conclusion

It can be deduced from the foregoing findings that a majority of institutions reached do not have clear career guidance program for the development of their employees. This is of the implication that these employees lack a clear career development path in their present work stations and may thus be demotivation to perform to their best. It is as such important that these institutions set up career guidance programs to enable their employees perform to the best of their respective abilities. It can further be deduced from the foregoing finding that career guidance as regards counseling and mentorship is inadequately practiced across a majority of the institutions surveyed. There is need for the study area and similar institutions to institute policies that will enhance career growth opportunities especially for employees. Employees should also be allowed time and resources to further education in order to not only be abreast with changes in their respective professions but also increase chances for growth.

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