

Effects of Career Growth Management on Employees' Turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils

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Abstract: *The study investigated the effects of career growth management on employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils. The study used a cross sectional research design involving surveys and interviews. A sample size of 310 respondents was used in the study but 297 answered and returned the questionnaires. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS version 22. The study findings revealed a significant negative effect of career growth management on employees' turnover in Jinja and Mbale City Councils. The findings concluded that career growth management had a negative significant effect on employees' turnover in Jinja and Mbale districts. The study recommends that City Councils should establish clear career progression pathways and provide regular training and development opportunities.*

Keywords: Career Growth Management, Employees' Turnover, City Councils

Introduction

Globally, employee career growth and development has been recognized as an important aspect of retaining talent in organizations (Li et al., 2021). Historical studies dating back to the 1930s showed that lack of opportunities for growth contributed to high levels of employee turnover (Marcotte, 2015). This led many governments and companies to establish formal policies and programs focused on training, mentorship, performance reviews and promotions to help employees enhance their skills and advance their careers (Kucharska & Nofer, 2021). When implemented effectively, such career management initiatives were found to significantly reduce unwanted resignations and retain knowledgeable staff (Ghosh & Gurunathan, 2015).

In Africa, issues of high employee turnover impacted the growth of government institutions and service delivery in the post-colonial era (Adeyemi & Akpotu, 2021). By the 1980s, studies in South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria associated lack of career paths with public sector workers frequently changing jobs (Ojong, 2020). As African nations pursued civil service reforms in the 1990s, several countries adopted measures like succession planning, skills development and defined career frameworks to curb turnover within their growing bureaucracies (Mabika, 2020). Evaluations show these measures have since helped stabilize workforces and boost productivity across various African public institutions (Wamae, 2018).

In East Africa, research in the 1990s highlighted career management as vital for municipal governments struggling with staff retention challenges (Munene, 2021). A study of local authorities in Tanzania, Uganda and Burundi linked lack of promotions and limited career mobility to high employee turnover levels exceeding 30% annually in some councils (Carette et al., 2020). Since then, major East African cities like Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Kampala and Kigali established new career structures with clear progression tracks to motivate staff and reduce unwanted staff losses (Tessema & Soeters, 2006).

In Uganda, the issue of career growth assumed prominence with decentralization reforms beginning in the late 1990s (Aheisibwe et al., 2021). A study by the Uganda Local Government Association found limited career prospects to be a key driver of turnover in multiple district and city administrations, hampering service delivery (Kaddu, 2016). In response, major municipalities like Kampala, Jinja and Mbale worked to define competency-based career paths aligned to roles and needs while rolling out training programs (Nangoli et al., 2013). A review by the Ministry of Public Service showed this had significantly lowered resignation rates across Ugandan local governments to below 15% per annum (Semakula, 2019).

In Jinja and Mbale City Councils, lack of focused career management was identified as a constraint in a 2008 assessment (Atekyereza et al., 2011). Both councils then embarked on developing tiered career structures with specific entry points, roles and advancement criteria anchored on performance (Kiwanuka, 2012). By 2013, evaluations established this had reduced unwanted staff losses to below 10% annually in Jinja and Mbale, enhancing stability for local service provision (Ntege & Nannyonjo, 2017). However, limited funding continues to hamper robust implementation of all planned career development interventions (Tumutegyeize et al., 2021).

A study was conducted in 2019 to analyze the effects of career growth management on employee turnover in Mbale City and Jinja City councils in Uganda (Opolot & Ssemugabi, 2019). The study found that lack of opportunities for career advancement and skills

development were major contributors to high employee turnover levels in both councils. Through questionnaires and interviews with 100 employees across different departments in the two councils, it was revealed that many staff left the organizations due to stagnation in their roles without possibilities for promotions or training opportunities to improve their skills and take on new responsibilities. The results showed that 81% of employees who quit the councils in the previous year cited lack of career growth pathways as their main reason for resigning. However, the 17% of employees who had benefited from training programs and were promoted to higher roles within the last two years reported higher job satisfaction and lower intentions to leave the organizations.

Furthermore, Mwesigwa and Mutumba (2024) conducted in-depth interviews with human resource managers at the two councils and learned that inadequate funding hindered strategic career planning activities. Both councils lacked structured programs for skills development, coaching and succession mapping. As a result, talented staff often left for better opportunities elsewhere. To address this, in the City council launched began to provide career growth to staff to improve staff retention. Therefore, this study was conducted to establish the effect of employee career growth management on employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils.

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, organizations should promote employee growth, satisfaction and retention through strategic career management. However, in Mbale and Jinja City councils in Uganda, inadequate career growth opportunities have reportedly led to high turnover rates in recent years (Opolot et al., 2023; Mwesigwa & Mutumba, 2024). While retaining skilled staff through training and progression is crucial for service delivery, both councils lacked structured career plans due to limited budgets. As a result, the real situation showed many employees stagnated in roles for prolonged periods without possibilities for skills enhancement or promotions. The key causes of the problem include lack of funding for strategic career management initiatives, unclear guidelines for career progression, and infrequent training opportunities. Therefore, there was need for integrated long-term career plans and increased budgetary allocation across both councils to boost employee retention. This study established the effects of employee career growth management on employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils.

Objective of the Study

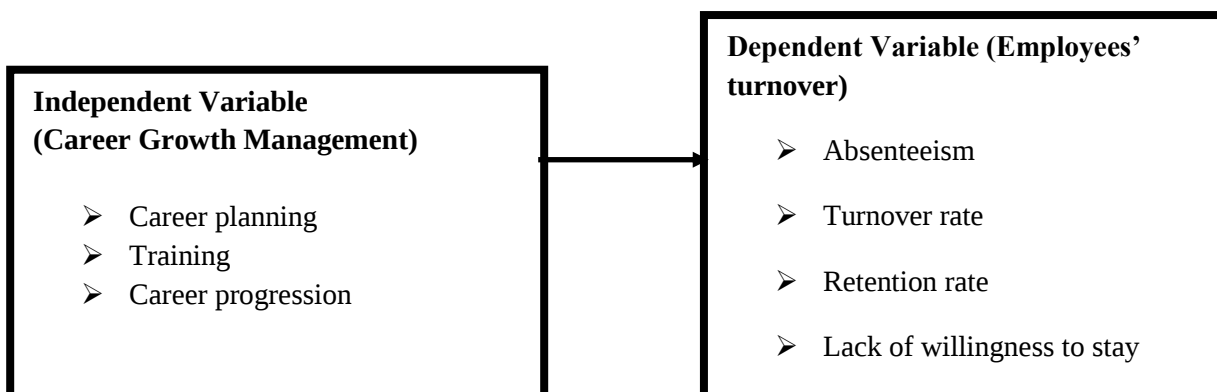
To establish the effects of employee career growth management on employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils.

Research Hypotheses

H₀: Employee career growth has no significant positive effect on employees' turnover in City Councils of Mbale and Jinja.

Conceptual Framework

The figure below indicated how career growth management as independent variable relates to employees turnover as a predicted/dependent variable.



Source: Glickman (1990), modified by the researcher (2023)

Literature Review

Ochen and Aceng (2020) explored the factors influencing employee career progression in five regional referral hospitals in Uganda, including Mulago, Fort Portal, Mbarara, Gulu, and Soroti. Their research highlighted the crucial role of perceived competence in career advancement. A survey of 400 health workers revealed a strong link between staff's self-rated skills and their chances of

promotion. Employees who felt their abilities aligned with job openings had a more optimistic view of career mobility. The study concluded that using clear, competency-based criteria for promotions fosters perceptions of fairness and supports a merit-based system, ensuring the most qualified candidates advance. This approach reinforces the idea that career growth should be based on demonstrated competence, promoting confidence in meritocratic career progression.

Kairu and Walingo (2020) examined how training and development impacted career advancement among employees at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. A survey of 300 staff members showed that those who participated in more internal and external training courses over the past five years experienced greater career progress and higher job satisfaction. Regression analysis demonstrated a significant link between training investments and employees' perceptions of career development support from their organization. Interviews revealed that training programs enhanced technical skills and helped employees feel more prepared to pursue advanced roles. Participants appreciated the organization's provision of learning opportunities to support their career growth.

Owino and Were (2020) investigated the factors contributing to unclear career pathways among public university staff in Kenya. A survey of 350 non-teaching employees revealed that only 15% felt their institution had a clearly communicated and fair career structure. Most respondents highlighted confusion over the criteria for advancing to higher positions and a lack of transparency in the process. Interviews reflected widespread frustration with seemingly arbitrary decisions and inconsistent policy application across departments. However, statistical analysis showed that perceptions of fairness and a performance-driven system varied significantly by gender, age, and tenure, with younger, female, and less experienced employees expressing greater uncertainty about career progression expectations.

Akullu and Akullu (2020) investigated employee perceptions of career mobility policies in Ugandan manufacturing firms. The study revealed that only 30% of lower-level employees felt that promotion guidelines were reasonable or attainable. Qualitative data showed widespread confusion about the eligibility criteria, with many perceiving a disconnect between the stated requirements and the actual selection process. Quantitative analysis found that perceptions of fairness and clarity in the guidelines varied significantly by tenure, with employees who had 5+ years of experience viewing the criteria as far more unreasonable than newer hires. The researchers concluded that promotions were not based on clear, consistent standards as suggested, but rather were opaque and susceptible to bias.

Okitoi and Lagat (2018) studied employee satisfaction with training and skills development at two large agencies in Kenya. A survey of 400 staff revealed that only 35% felt their organization offered adequate internal and external learning programs to support career advancement. Statistical analysis showed that overall views were not positive, with a mean satisfaction rating of 2.8 and a high standard deviation of 1.5, indicating widespread variability, if not general dissatisfaction. Interviews revealed that training was offered infrequently and was not aligned with individual career goals. Regression analysis indicated that employees in technology and senior management roles rated development opportunities significantly lower. The researchers concluded that clear promotion and reward systems are crucial for organizational growth and productivity, as they help reduce employee turnover.

Ainebyoona (2021) found that staff training, career advancement opportunities, and career planning had a statistically significant relationship with employee performance, indicating that improvements in these areas lead to enhanced performance. Career planning elements such as personal plans, advising, development programs, self-assessments, and training options also showed a positive and significant correlation with employee performance. However, his study did not explore employee turnover, which is the focus of the current study. Training and development opportunities are key factors in reducing employee turnover.

Methods

The study employed a cross-sectional design to effectively collect data from a diverse group of respondents. This approach was particularly beneficial for assessing the prevalence of specific characteristics, conditions, or behaviors within a population at a particular point in time (Levin, 2017). The research was based on ontological and epistemological assumptions, with a population of 1,384 from which a sample size of 310 was determined using Slovin's formula: $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$. Both simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were utilized to select participants. However, when the questionnaires were administered, only 297 respondents provided quantitative data.

Findings

In this study, the researcher established the effect of Employee career growth management on employees' turnover in Jinja and Mbale City Councils,

Descriptive Statistics on Employee Career Growth Management in Mbale and Jinja City Councils

The study first analysed descriptive statistics using as presented in Table 4.1 below;

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics for Employee Career Growth Management in Jinja and Mbale City Councils

Career management	growth	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Career advancement in the city council is based on competencies of staff		35(11.8%)	26(8.8%)	19(6.4%)	96(32.3%)	121(40.7%)	3.86	1.349
Our city council support career development through training of its staff		23(7.7%)	37(12.5%)	13(4.4%)	110(37.0%)	114(38.4%)	3.86	1.267
Our city council has a well-structured career progression plan guided on equity and merit		19(6.5%)	34(11.4%)	15(5.1%)	102(34.3%)	127(42.7%)	3.95	1.234
Our city council has a career progression guideline which stipulates conditions for promotion		12(4.2%)	33(11.1%)	16(5.2%)	116(39.2%)	120(40.3%)	4.03	1.111
My council has both internal and external programs that develop its staff for future positions		19(6.5%)	45(15.2%)	16(5.3%)	119(39.9%)	98(33.1%)	3.79	1.240

Source: Primary Data, (2024)

The study findings from Table 4.1 indicated that career advancement in the city council was based on competencies of staff was strongly agreed by 121(40.7%) of the respondents, 96(32.3%) agreed, 19(6.4%) undecided disagreed and 26(8.8%) strongly disagreed that career advancement in their city councils is based on the competencies of staff, resulting in a high mean score of 3.86 and a standard deviation of 1.349. This suggests that a significant portion of employees believe in merit-based progression, although the relatively high standard deviation indicates some variability in responses.

Regarding the statement that “our city council support career development through training of its staff”, Table 4.1 revealed that 114(38.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 110(37.0%) agreed, 13(4.4%) were not sure, 37(12.5%) disagreed and 23(7.7%) strongly disagreed with a mean score of 3.86 and a standard deviation of 1.267. This indicates a positive perception of training opportunities, although there is some variability in opinions.

From Table 4.1, study responses showed that 127(42.7%) strongly agreed, 102(34.3%) agreed that their city councils have a well-structured career progression plan based on equity and merit, 15(5.1%) were not sur, 34(11.4%) and 19(6.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean score for this item is 3.95 with a standard deviation of 1.234, reflecting a general consensus among employees about the fairness and clarity of career progression plans, although with some differences in views.

Table 4.1 also indicated that 120(40.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 116(39.2%) agreed that the city councils have career progression guideline which stipulates conditions for promotion, 16(5.2%) were not sure, 33(11.1%) disagreed and 12(4.2%) strongly disagreed. This yields an average level of agreement of 4.03 with a standard deviation of 1.111 indicating views were dispersed across levels of agreement.

The responses in Table 4.1 indicated that a majority of employees 98(33.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 119(39.9%) agreed, 16(5.3%) were not sure and 45(15.2%) and 19(6.5%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that their council offers both internal and external programs to develop staff for future positions, resulting in a mean score of 3.79 with a standard deviation of 1.240. This suggests a generally positive view of the development opportunities available, although there is some variability in perceptions, as reflected by the standard deviation.

Table 4.2 shows correlational results that depict the relationship between employee career growth management and employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils.

Table 4.2: Correlation between Employee Career Growth Management and Employees' Turnover

		Employee career growth management	Employees' Turnover
Employee career growth management	Pearson Correlation	1	-.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.009
	N	297	297
Employee turnover	Pearson Correlation	-.053	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	
	N	297	297

Source: Primary Data (2024)

From table 4.2, correlation analysis examined the relationship between employee career growth management and employee turnover rates in Jinja and Mbale city councils. The findings found a negative correlation of -0.053 between employee career growth management and employee turnover, indicating that higher levels of career growth management are weakly associated with lower turnover. However, the correlation is very weak at 0.053 and the relationship was statistically significant $P > 0.00$. Therefore, while career growth management may potentially help reduce employee turnover, there is no strong or meaningful relationship between the variables.

Conclusion could not be made about this relationship, based on the result of this correlation analysis alone. And since there is at least some correlational relationship, the variables are fit for a regression analysis, which revealed the effect of Employee career growth management on employees' turnover. Therefore, a regression analysis was performed to confirm the effect of Employee career growth management on employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils.

The study used simple regression analysis to examine the effect of employee career growth management on employees' turnover and this was done to see if there was any significance between employee career growth management on employees' turnover as below;

Table 4.3: Model summary for Employee Career Growth Management and Employees' Turnover

Model summary					
Model	R	R. Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	-.053 ^a	.280	.278	.594	
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	3.959	.170		23.264	.000
1 Employee career growth management	-.036	.042	-.053	.863	.009

a. Dependent Variable: Employees' Turnover

The model summary in table 4.3 produced an R square of .280, which is very low. This means 28% changes of variations in employees' turnover is due to the sole effect of Employee career growth management while the remaining 72% are due to the other factors.

Regression results in Table 4.3 shows the results of that career growth management significantly affect employee turnover. The results reveal that career growth management is statistically significant in explaining employee turnover. This is supported by $\beta = -.036$, $t = .863$, $p < 0.009$. The results imply that a unit increase in career growth management lead to a decrease in employee turnover by $-.036$ units.

The findings imply that employees are likely to stay at an organization longer when there are clear opportunities for career advancement. The results imply that improving programs and perceptions of career growth management by one unit would relate to a 0.036 unit decrease in employee turnover rates. This study demonstrates the important role that career progression plays in reducing staff attrition within the city councils.

Does employee career growth influence employee turnover?

A key informant said *"It absolutely does though it is sometimes relative because the local government structure are limited and the employees will feel that there is no space for growth thereby leading employees to look for better options that allow growth. For example if people acquire more skills than in the Job they have been placed, they will definitely look for somewhere to apply these skills that staying in one place where they cannot practice them"* (Participant JCC).

Discussion of Findings

The findings had a mean of 3.86 regarding career advancement based on competencies, suggesting most believed in merit-based progression. There was some variability as the standard deviation was 1.349. The relatively high mean indicates a general consensus that career advancement should be based on employees' competencies, reflecting a positive attitude towards meritocratic practices within the City Councils of Jinja and Mbale. However, the substantial standard deviation points to significant variation in individual

perceptions and experiences regarding the fairness and implementation of merit-based career advancement. The findings of Ochen and Aceng (2020) aligned with those presented above, both pointing to staff having confidence in merit-based systems that reward performance and qualifications rather than other attributes. Developing career paths grounded in demonstrated competence fosters beliefs that the best-qualified candidates can rise through the ranks.

Regarding training support for career development, the mean was 3.86 with a standard deviation of 1.267, indicating a positive perception but variability. The mean score suggests that most employees believe their organizations support career development through training, which aligns with the expectations of employees who value opportunities for professional growth. However, the standard deviation reflects considerable variability in individual experiences and perceptions of training support. Kairu and Walingo (2020) revealed that trainings expanded technical skills and helped employees feel better equipped to apply for advanced roles in the future. Participants expressed appreciation that their employers provided learning resources to facilitate career growth. The findings aligned with the positive perception indicated above, both suggesting training availability fosters improved outlooks on developmental opportunities within these East African institutions. Investing in continuous skill-building through workplace training can thus engender positive career planning perceptions.

The findings on structured career progression plan based on equity and merit was used, the mean was 3.95 with standard deviation of 1.234, reflecting consensus though some differences. The mean score indicates that respondents largely agree that their organization has a clear and equitable career progression plan. However, the standard deviation points to some variability in how employees perceive the fairness and clarity of these progression plans. In contrast with these findings, Owino and Were (2020) examined factors influencing unclear career pathways among public university staff in Kenya and the findings reported ambiguities in requirements for advancing to higher roles and a lack of transparency in the process.

For career progression guidelines stipulating promotion conditions, the mean was 4.03 with standard deviation of 1.111, showing most agreed the criteria are reasonable despite dispersed views. The findings aligned with the current study findings above in showing general consensus in fairness of career guidelines, despite natural differences depending on demographic or employment factors. However, Akullu and Akullu (2020) contradicts with the findings reported above by revealing greater disagreement, or at least variability beyond dispersed views, on the perceived rationality of career progression benchmarks across the surveyed organizations.

The findings of the study indicated that the mean for internal and external development programs was 3.79 with standard deviation of 1.240. This suggests a generally positive view of opportunities, though some variability in perceptions. The mean indicates that most respondents perceive these programs as beneficial, yet the standard deviation highlights some variability in how these opportunities are experienced and perceived by different employees. The findings were in disagreement with those of Okitoi and Lagat (2018) whose study revealed that only 35% agreed their organization provided sufficient internal and external learning programs to further their careers. This study thus presented alternative findings that challenge the notion development programs elicited generally favorable outlooks as implied above.

The study findings on the regression results in showed the results of that career growth management significantly affect employee turnover. The results reveal that career growth management is statistically significant in explaining employee turnover. This is supported by $\beta = -.036$, $t = .863$, $p < 0.009$. The results imply that a unit increase in career growth management lead to a decrease in employee turnover by $-.036$ units. The findings concurred with Ainebyoona (2021) shoes study on the relationship between career development programs and employee performance in local governments in Kanungu District revealed that career development programme's dimensions of training, career planning and career advancement reduces employee turnover.

Conclusion

The study hypothesized that employee career growth management has no significant positive effect on employees' turnover in City Councils of Mbale and Jinja. However, the findings of the study revealed a significant negative effect of employee career growth on employees' turnover. Therefore, the study concluded that employee career growth management has a negative significant effect on employees' turnover in City Councils of Mbale and Jinja. The results provide evidence against the null hypothesis and support the alternative hypothesis that employee career growth does have a significant negative on employees' turnover.

Recommendations

The study's findings that employee career growth significantly reduces turnover indicate the importance of career development programs. City Councils should establish clear career progression pathways and provide regular training and development opportunities. Mentorship programs can help employees gain insights and advice from experienced colleagues, fostering a culture

of growth and learning. Additionally, offering tuition reimbursement or sponsorship for further education can motivate employees to enhance their skills and advance their careers within the councils. Regular career development discussions between employees and managers can ensure alignment of personal career goals with organizational objectives, thereby reducing turnover.

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