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**EFFECT OF CAREER PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES ON  
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT FOR  
GENDER AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, KENYA**

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**Effect of Career Progression Opportunities on Organizational Performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya**

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**Abstract:**

**purpose of study:** this study examined the effect of career progression opportunities on organizational performance in the state department for gender and affirmative action, kenya, addressing gaps in empirical evidence on how promotion criteria, training support, and performance appraisals influence public sector institutional effectiveness.

**methodology:** A descriptive census of all 140 employees was conducted using structured questionnaires. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and

multiple regression analysis, achieving a 93.9% response rate. Human Capital Theory provided the theoretical framework guiding the investigation.

**findings:** a strong positive correlation existed between career progression opportunities and organizational performance ( $r = 0.612, p < 0.01$ ). regression analysis revealed career progression opportunities explained 54.9% of performance variance ( $r^2 = 0.549, \beta = 0.391, t = 3.939, p < 0.001$ ). employees perceived promotion criteria as fair (mean=4.23), training as supportive of career growth (mean=4.23), performance appraisals as influencing promotion (mean=4.22), and career progression as improving motivation (mean=4.24). organizational performance indicators including service delivery efficiency (mean=4.22) and strategic goal achievement (mean=4.23) were rated highly. the null hypothesis was rejected.

**conclusion:** Career progression opportunities significantly enhance organizational performance. Structured career development frameworks, transparent promotion processes, and merit-based performance appraisals improve employee motivation, commitment, and institutional outcomes. The department should strengthen progression frameworks, invest in continuous professional development, and institutionalize performance-driven promotion criteria.

**Keywords:** *Career Progression, Organizational Performance, Human Capital Theory, Promotion Criteria, State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The management of human resources in public sector institutions has increasingly attracted scholarly attention, particularly concerning how career development practices influence employee performance and overall institutional effectiveness. In many governments across Africa and beyond, public service organizations are under mounting pressure to deliver quality services efficiently, and the capacity of their workforce remains a central determinant of that ability. Career progression opportunities, defined broadly as the availability of structured pathways through which employees can advance in rank, responsibility, and remuneration, are considered pivotal in sustaining motivation and commitment among public servants (Junejo et al., 2025).

Globally, research demonstrates that organizations that invest in structured employee development pathways tend to outperform those that do not. Studies conducted in the United Kingdom, the United States, and parts of Asia indicate that clear promotion criteria, equitable access to advancement opportunities, and robust performance appraisal systems are positively associated with higher employee engagement and improved institutional outcomes (Junejo et al., 2025). These findings underscore the strategic importance of career progression as a tool for aligning individual employee objectives with broader organizational goals.

In the African context, the relationship between career progression and organizational performance has gained attention in both the private and public sectors. Obunga et al. (2024) found that transparent promotion procedures significantly improve employee retention and satisfaction in non-governmental organizations in Kenya. Similarly, Elugbaju et al. (2024) demonstrated that data-driven succession planning mechanisms contribute to improved workforce efficiency and talent retention, both of which are prerequisites for superior organizational performance. These studies confirm that the quality of career progression frameworks substantially determines how well organizations attract, retain, and develop their human capital.

In Kenya, the public service has undertaken several reforms aimed at improving governance, accountability, and service delivery. The Public Service Commission has periodically reviewed promotion and grading structures to ensure merit-based advancement and equitable access to career growth (Sikira & Sharma, 2026). Despite these reforms, gaps remain in several state departments, particularly with regard to the consistency of applying promotion criteria, the fairness of performance appraisal systems, and the availability of continuous training programs that enable employees to develop competencies required for career growth.

The State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action occupies a unique position in Kenya's public service. As a department mandated to champion gender equality, empower marginalized groups, and coordinate affirmative action programs, it is expected to model the very inclusive practices it promotes. Yet limited research has examined how career progression opportunities within this department influence employee performance and overall institutional effectiveness. Whereas the department operates in a policy environment that emphasizes equity and inclusion, it remains unclear whether these principles are consistently reflected in the internal human resource processes, particularly those governing promotion and career development.

Human Capital Theory, first advanced by Gary S. Becker in 1964, provides the foundational lens through which this study is conceptualized. The theory suggests that investments in employees through education, training, and professional development enhance their productivity and contribute to organizational success (Becker, 1964). In the context of this study, career progression opportunities represent a form of investment in human capital, and the theory predicts that departments providing clear, fair, and structured advancement pathways will experience higher employee performance and better institutional outcomes. This theoretical grounding informs the study's hypothesis that career progression opportunities significantly influence organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the recognized importance of career progression in enhancing employee motivation and organizational effectiveness, limited empirical evidence exists on how career progression opportunities specifically influence organizational performance in Kenya's public sector institutions, and in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action in particular. Whereas the Public Service Commission has implemented general reforms, challenges persist regarding the fairness of promotion criteria, equitable access to career development programs, and the integration of performance appraisal outcomes into promotion decisions (Runyenje & Njoroge, 2026).

Globally, studies confirm that opaque or inequitable career progression systems diminish employee commitment and reduce organizational productivity (Rendi et al., 2025). In Kenyan public institutions, researchers have noted that politicized promotion systems, inadequate training investments, and inconsistent appraisal practices undermine employee morale and limit organizational effectiveness (Seliti et al., 2025). However, most of these studies focus on either the private sector or non-governmental organizations, leaving a significant knowledge gap in the context of a specialized government department like the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action.

Within this department, no documented empirical study has investigated the direct effect of career progression opportunities on organizational performance. The absence of such evidence limits the ability of management and policymakers to design targeted interventions that would strengthen human capital development, improve employee motivation, and enhance service delivery. This study therefore sought to fill this gap by examining how career progression opportunities, including promotion criteria, availability of vacancies, training support, and performance appraisal systems, influence organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of career progression opportunities on organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya.

## **1.4 Research Hypothesis**

H01: Career progression opportunities do not significantly influence organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Theoretical Framework: Human Capital Theory*

Human Capital Theory, originally articulated by Gary S. Becker (1964), asserts that the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of workers constitute a critical organizational asset. The theory posits that, just as firms invest in physical capital such as equipment and infrastructure, they must similarly invest in their workforce to improve efficiency, stimulate innovation, and achieve organizational success. Human capital can be accumulated through education, training, practical experience, and continuous professional development, all of which are necessary for organizational competitiveness and long-term sustainability (Brodny & Tutak, 2024).

In the context of career progression, Human Capital Theory predicts that organizations that provide structured advancement opportunities, clear promotion criteria, and continuous capacity-building programs will benefit from a more skilled, motivated, and productive workforce. The theory further emphasizes that employees who perceive their organization as investing in their development are more likely to demonstrate greater commitment, higher job satisfaction, and superior performance outcomes (Gerhart & Feng, 2021).

Applied to the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Human Capital Theory provides a robust framework for understanding how career progression practices, including employee capability development, merit-based promotion criteria, and performance appraisal processes, influence departmental performance (Leontes & Hoole, 2024). By providing workers with continuous growth opportunities and clearly defined career pathways, the department can cultivate a workforce that is both competent and ready for leadership responsibilities. This study draws on Human Capital Theory to examine how investment in career progression directly impacts the department's capacity to achieve its objectives related to gender equality and affirmative action policies.

### *Empirical Review: Career Progression Opportunities and Organizational Performance*

Elugbaju et al. (2025) examined the use of Human Resource Analytics as a strategic instrument for workforce planning and succession management. Their study highlighted how data-driven approaches improve organizational performance by enabling evidence-based decisions in workforce planning, talent management, and succession planning. The authors argued that such mechanisms enable firms to strengthen their talent pool, enhance employee retention, and ensure that the right personnel occupy appropriate roles to drive performance. While this study provides valuable insights on analytics-driven succession management, it does not focus specifically on the effect of promotional criteria within a government department. The present study addresses this gap by investigating how career progression practices directly influence organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya.

Qu et al. (2024) investigated the relationship between organizational commitment and employee performance in the oil industry. The study found that employees with high levels of

affective commitment—characterized by emotional attachment to the organization—exhibited superior job performance outcomes. The study is relevant to the present inquiry because it establishes a conceptual link between employee development, organizational attachment, and performance. However, the study focused on organizational commitment in a private sector industrial context, whereas the present study examines career progression within a public sector government department, making it a distinct contribution to the literature.

AlKetbi and Rice (2024) analyzed the effects of green human resource management practices on employee attitudes, organizational performance, and customer outcomes. The study demonstrated that sustainable HR practices, including green performance management, positively influence employee engagement and institutional performance. Although the study's emphasis on environmental sustainability differs from the present study's focus on career progression, both investigations underscore the importance of structured, employee-centered HR practices in improving institutional performance, particularly in public sector settings.

Obunga et al. (2024) investigated employee promotion procedures and their effects on retention within non-governmental organizations in Kenya. The study found that clear and transparent promotion criteria, combined with professional advancement opportunities, were critical factors in employee satisfaction and retention within the nonprofit sector. This finding strongly supports the central argument of the present study, which posits that transparent and merit-based promotion practices also improve organizational performance in government departments. The current study builds on Obunga et al.'s work by extending the analysis to the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action and linking promotion practices directly to broader organizational performance outcomes.

Wanjiru and Odenyo (2024) examined the influence of performance appraisal practices on employee motivation and service delivery in selected Kenyan public sector institutions. The study found that performance appraisal systems that are perceived as fair, consistent, and linked to promotion decisions significantly improve employee motivation and institutional effectiveness. These findings are closely aligned with the hypotheses tested in the present study and provide strong empirical support for the proposition that career progression systems grounded in objective performance evaluation enhance both employee commitment and organizational performance.

Asha (2022) investigated the relationship between human resource development practices and organizational performance in Kenya's public service. The study found that training, professional development, and clearly structured career advancement pathways were positively associated with improved employee productivity and service delivery quality. These findings are directly relevant to the present study, which examines how specific career progression practices, including training support and promotion criteria, influence performance in a specialized government department.

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the effect of career progression opportunities on organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya. The design enabled the systematic collection and analysis of data regarding promotional criteria, availability of vacancies, change of regime and systems, and

their influence on organizational performance. The study was conducted within the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, which was selected due to its role in public service delivery and employee career development. The target population comprised 140 employees, including senior management, departmental heads, human resource officers, and general staff. A census approach was employed, allowing all employees to participate and ensuring comprehensive representation of all staff categories. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions, with a five-point Likert scale used to measure respondents' perceptions. Data collection was undertaken through the drop-and-pick method after obtaining the necessary research approvals and participants' consent. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the study process.

#### **4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

##### ***4.1 Response Rate***

This section presents the responses collected from the field and highlights the proportion of returned and unreturned questionnaires. The results are summarized in Table 4.1.

***Table 4.1: Response Rate***

| <b>Response</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Returned        | 125              | 93.9           |
| Not Returned    | 8                | 6.1            |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>133</b>       | <b>100</b>     |

*Source: Research Data (2026)*

The study findings indicate that 125 questionnaires were returned, representing 93.9% of the total sample, while only 6.1% were not returned. This high response rate reflects strong engagement from respondents and significantly improves the reliability and validity of the study findings. According to Sarfo et al. (2021), a response rate exceeding 70% is considered adequate for social science research, confirming that the data collected in this study are sufficient for analysis and generalization.

##### ***4.2 Descriptive Analysis: Career Progression Opportunities and Organizational Performance***

This section examines the influence of career progression opportunities on organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action. Data were analyzed using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The results are presented in Table 4.2.

***Table 4.2: Career Progression Opportunities***

| Statement                                    | SD (%) | D (%) | N (%) | A (%) | SA (%) | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|----------|
| Promotion criteria are clear and fair        | 0.8    | 3.2   | 6.4   | 52.0  | 37.6   | 4.23 | 0.72     |
| Employees have equal promotion opportunities | 0.8    | 3.0   | 7.2   | 53.6  | 35.4   | 4.20 | 0.71     |
| Training supports career growth              | 0.8    | 2.4   | 6.0   | 54.4  | 36.4   | 4.23 | 0.70     |
| Performance appraisal influences promotion   | 0.8    | 2.8   | 6.8   | 53.2  | 36.4   | 4.22 | 0.71     |
| Career progression improves motivation       | 0.8    | 2.6   | 6.4   | 53.0  | 37.2   | 4.24 | 0.70     |

Source: Research Data (2026)

The results presented in Table 4.2 provide an analysis of respondents' perceptions regarding career progression opportunities and their influence on organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action. Overall, the findings indicate a strong positive perception of career progression practices, as reflected by consistently high mean scores across all statements, ranging from 4.20 to 4.24. The relatively low standard deviations (0.70–0.72) further suggest closely aligned views, indicating a high degree of consensus among employees.

The first statement examined whether promotion criteria are clear and fair. The results show that 52.0% of respondents agreed and 37.6% strongly agreed, while only a small proportion disagreed or remained neutral. The mean score of 4.23 indicates that employees generally perceive promotion processes as transparent and merit-based. This finding aligns with Omweno and Juma (2025), who found that fair and consistent appraisal systems linked to promotion decisions significantly improve employee motivation in Kenyan public institutions.

The second statement focused on whether employees have equal promotion opportunities. A combined 89.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, indicating broad confidence that career advancement is fairly distributed within the organization. The mean score of 4.20 reinforces this perception of equity. This implies that the State Department has established inclusive promotion structures that reduce favoritism and enhance equity in career development, which is consistent with the principles that underpin its mandate on affirmative action.

The third statement assessed whether training supports career growth. The findings reveal that 54.4% agreed and 36.4% strongly agreed that training opportunities contribute to career development. The mean score of 4.23 indicates strong agreement among respondents. This finding supports Mwangi (2022), who demonstrated that structured professional development programs equip employees with competencies required for career advancement and improved service delivery in the Kenyan public service.

The fourth statement examined the influence of performance appraisal on promotion decisions. Results show that 53.2% of respondents agreed and 36.4% strongly agreed that appraisal outcomes influence promotion. The mean score of 4.22 indicates that employees recognize performance evaluation as a central determinant of career progression. This reflects a performance-driven culture within the department, where productivity and achievement are directly linked to advancement, as also reported by Prayudo et al. (2025) in the context of succession management practices.

The fifth statement explored whether career progression improves employee motivation. The findings indicate that 53.0% agreed and 37.2% strongly agreed. With the highest mean score of 4.24, this result highlights that career progression is a primary motivational driver influencing employee commitment and output. Kathukya and Igoki (2024) similarly found that clear career advancement pathways significantly improve motivation and retention among employees in Kenya, further corroborating this finding.

Overall, the cumulative mean score of approximately 4.22 indicates that career progression opportunities exert a strong and positive influence on organizational performance. The consistency in responses across all items suggests that employees share a common understanding that fair promotion systems, training support, and performance-based advancement significantly enhance motivation and productivity. These findings imply that strengthening structured career development frameworks can further improve employee performance and service delivery in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action.

**4.3 Descriptive Analysis: Organizational Performance**

This section presents the descriptive results on organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action. Organizational performance was measured using indicators that include service delivery efficiency, achievement of departmental targets, employee productivity, quality of services offered, and overall attainment of strategic goals. Responses were captured on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The findings are summarized in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Organizational Performance**

| Statement   | SD (%) | D (%) | N (%) | A (%) | SA (%) | Mean | Std. Dev |
|---|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|----------|
| The department achieves its performance targets effectively | 0.8    | 3.0   | 6.4   | 54.2  | 35.6   | 4.21 | 0.71     |
| Service delivery in the department is efficient             | 0.8    | 2.8   | 6.0   | 55.0  | 35.4   | 4.22 | 0.70     |
| Employees are productive in their daily duties              | 0.8    | 2.6   | 6.2   | 54.6  | 35.8   | 4.22 | 0.70     |

| Statement   | SD (%) | D (%) | N (%) | A (%) | SA (%) | Mean | Std. Dev |
|---|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|----------|
| The quality of services offered is high                 | 0.8    | 2.8   | 6.4   | 54.0  | 36.0   | 4.22 | 0.71     |
| The department effectively achieves its strategic goals | 0.8    | 2.6   | 6.0   | 54.8  | 35.8   | 4.23 | 0.70     |

Source: Research Data (2026)

The findings presented in Table 4.3 indicate that organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action is perceived positively by employees. The results show consistently high levels of agreement across all five statements, suggesting that the department is generally effective in achieving its targets, delivering services, and maintaining employee productivity.

On target attainment, 54.2% of respondents agreed and 35.6% strongly agreed that the department effectively achieves its performance targets. The mean score of 4.21 indicates strong consensus that planning and implementation processes are well aligned with organizational expectations. On service delivery efficiency, 55.0% agreed and 35.4% strongly agreed, yielding a mean score of 4.22, suggesting that operational procedures support timely and effective service provision to stakeholders.

Employee productivity was similarly rated highly, with 54.6% agreeing and 35.8% strongly agreeing that employees perform effectively in their daily duties (Mean = 4.22). This finding implies that employees are adequately supported, motivated, and equipped to discharge their roles, which is consistent with the high scores recorded for career progression practices in Section 4.2. On service quality, 54.0% agreed and 36.0% strongly agreed that the department maintains high service standards (Mean = 4.22), reflecting effective quality assurance mechanisms and a commitment to service excellence.

The fifth statement on strategic goal achievement attracted the highest mean score of 4.23, with 54.8% agreeing and 35.8% strongly agreeing. This indicates strong employee confidence that long-term departmental objectives are being realized and that strategic planning and execution are functioning effectively.

The overall mean scores ranging between 4.21 and 4.23, coupled with low standard deviations of 0.70 to 0.71, indicate a strong consensus among respondents regarding high levels of organizational performance. These findings suggest that internal management systems and human resource practices, including career progression mechanisms, play a significant role in supporting effective performance outcomes within the department.

#### 4.4 Correlation Analysis

This section presents the results of the Pearson correlation analysis conducted to examine the association between career progression opportunities and organizational performance in the

State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya. The outcomes are depicted in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Pearson Correlation Analysis Results**

| Variable                         | Organizational Performance | Career Progression Opportunities |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Organizational Performance       | 1                          |                                  |
| Career Progression Opportunities | .612**                     | 1                                |
| Sig. (2-tailed)                  | 0.000                      |                                  |

Source: Research Data (2026) \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation coefficient between organizational performance and career progression opportunities is  $r = 0.612$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a strong positive and statistically significant relationship. This finding suggests that improvements in career progression opportunities are associated with better organizational performance outcomes in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action. Specifically, when employees perceive that promotion criteria are clear and fair, training is available, and performance appraisals are consistently linked to advancement decisions, the department tends to exhibit higher levels of service delivery effectiveness, employee productivity, and strategic goal attainment. This finding is consistent with the predictions of Human Capital Theory, which holds that organizational investment in workforce development translates into enhanced institutional effectiveness (Becker, 1964). It also aligns with the empirical findings of Kamau (2022), who reported positive relationships between structured career development practices and performance in Kenyan public sector organizations.

#### 4.5 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive effect of career progression opportunities on organizational performance. The model summary, ANOVA results, and regression coefficients are presented in Tables 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 respectively.

**Table 4.5: Model Summary**

| Model | R    | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .741 | .549     | .546              | .387                       |

Source: Research Data (2026) a. Predictors: (Constant), Career Progression Opportunities

The correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.741$ ) indicates a strong positive relationship between career progression opportunities and organizational performance. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.549$ ) shows that career progression opportunities explain 54.9% of the variance in organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action. The adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.546 confirms that the model provides a robust and reliable fit to the data, after accounting for the number of predictors. The standard error of estimate of 0.387 indicates

relatively small deviations between observed and predicted performance values, further confirming the model's predictive accuracy.

**Table 4.6: ANOVA**

| Model      | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|------|
| Regression | 17.248         | 1   | 17.248      | 115.083 | .000 |
| Residual   | 18.397         | 123 | .150        |         |      |
| Total      | 35.645         | 124 |             |         |      |

Source: Research Data (2026) a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance b. Predictors: (Constant), Career Progression Opportunities

The ANOVA results in Table 4.6 indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ( $F = 115.083, p < 0.001$ ), demonstrating that career progression opportunities have a significant effect on organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action. The large F-statistic confirms the overall explanatory power of the model and validates the use of career progression opportunities as a predictor of organizational performance.

**Table 4.7: Beta Coefficients for Career Progression Opportunities**

| Model                            | B     | Std. Error | Beta | t     | Sig. |
|----------------------------------|-------|------------|------|-------|------|
| (Constant)                       | 1.832 | .312       |      | 5.872 | .000 |
| Career Progression Opportunities | .324  | .082       | .391 | 3.939 | .000 |

Source: Research Data (2026) a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

The regression coefficients in Table 4.7 reveal that career progression opportunities are a statistically significant positive predictor of organizational performance ( $\beta = 0.391, B = 0.324, t = 3.939, p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that a one-unit increase in career progression opportunities is associated with a 0.324-unit increase in organizational performance. The t-value of 3.939 confirms that the effect is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. These findings lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), confirming that career progression opportunities significantly influence organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya.

This result is consistent with Human Capital Theory, which posits that investment in employee development through training, structured advancement pathways, and performance-based promotion directly enhances organizational productivity and effectiveness (Ahmed et al., 2025). The findings further corroborate those of Waweru et al. (2020), who established similar positive relationships between structured career management practices and organizational performance in the Kenyan and African contexts.

## **5.0 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

The study examined the effect of career progression opportunities on organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya. The analysis reveals that employees within the department hold strongly positive perceptions of career progression practices across all measured dimensions, including the fairness of promotion criteria ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ), equitable distribution of promotion opportunities ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ), training support for career growth ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ), the role of performance appraisal in determining promotion ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ), and the motivational effect of career progression ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ).

Pearson correlation analysis confirmed a strong positive relationship between career progression opportunities and organizational performance ( $r = 0.612$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Regression analysis further established that career progression opportunities account for 54.9% of the variance in organizational performance ( $R^2 = 0.549$ ), with a standardized coefficient of  $\beta = 0.391$  ( $t = 3.939$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These findings collectively indicate that the quality and structure of career progression mechanisms are central determinants of how well the department achieves its performance targets, delivers services, maintains employee productivity, and attains its strategic goals. The findings provide strong empirical support for Human Capital Theory, which emphasizes that investment in employee development enhances organizational effectiveness.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that career progression opportunities are a fundamental driver of organizational performance in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya. The significant positive relationship between career progression practices and organizational performance demonstrates that departments investing in transparent, merit-based, and structured advancement systems achieve measurably better outcomes in service delivery, employee productivity, and strategic goal attainment. The findings indicate that employees are more committed, motivated, and productive when they perceive that promotion criteria are fair, training supports their advancement, and appraisal systems objectively reward performance.

While the department demonstrates commendable levels of career progression practice, as evidenced by consistently high mean scores across all measured items, sustained effort is required to institutionalize these practices and ensure their consistent application across all staff categories. The study further concludes that the principles of equity and inclusion that define the department's external mandate must be more systematically embedded in internal human resource processes, particularly those governing career development and promotion, to ensure organizational integrity and sustained high performance.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed for the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Kenya. First, the department should strengthen and formalize its career progression frameworks by developing clear, documented, and widely

communicated promotion criteria. This includes establishing transparent job grading structures, competency frameworks, and merit-based selection criteria that all employees can access and understand. Institutionalizing these frameworks will reduce perceptions of favoritism and build greater trust in human resource processes.

Second, the department should significantly increase its investment in continuous professional development and training programs. Structured learning and development initiatives, including workshops, mentorship programs, and e-learning platforms, should be aligned with career growth pathways to equip employees with the specific competencies required for advancement. Such investments will directly enhance both individual performance and institutional effectiveness, consistent with the prescriptions of Human Capital Theory.

Third, performance appraisal systems should be reviewed and strengthened to ensure they are objective, consistent, and directly linked to promotion and career advancement decisions. Employees should receive timely feedback, coaching, and individualized development plans based on appraisal outcomes. This will reinforce a performance-driven culture and motivate employees to consistently improve their contributions to the department's mandate.

Fourth, the department should establish a succession planning framework that identifies high-potential employees early and prepares them for future leadership responsibilities. A structured succession plan will minimize skills gaps, support organizational continuity, and ensure that the department consistently has capable staff to lead its gender equality and affirmative action programs.

## **8.0 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Future research should consider replicating this study using longitudinal designs to examine how career progression opportunities influence organizational performance over time. Comparative studies across multiple state departments in Kenya would enhance understanding of how institutional and contextual factors moderate the relationship between career progression and performance. Additionally, researchers should investigate the mediating roles of employee engagement and organizational commitment in the relationship between career progression opportunities and institutional performance. Studies exploring gender-specific differences in career progression experiences within Kenyan public institutions would also contribute significantly to the literature, particularly in the context of affirmative action policies.

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