Employee Planning as a Driver of Organizational Performance in Public Institutions in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Employee planning has emerged as a strategic human resource management function that enhances organizational performance by enabling public institutions to align workforce capacity with organizational objectives and the growing demand for efficient, accountable, and citizen-centered service delivery. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the role of employee planning in enhancing organizational performance across public institutions operating under diverse administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. Specifically, it investigated the influence of workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management on organizational performance, measured through service delivery efficiency, financial management, and employee productivity under diverse administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. The study focused on a target population of 245 senior and middle-level managers selected from Kakamega County Government Departments, including human resource management, finance, health, education, infrastructure, agriculture, and administration. These departments were purposively selected to ensure broad representation of public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. It employed a descriptive survey research design within a convergent parallel mixed-methods framework. Using Yamane's (1967) formula, a sample of 151 respondents was determined from the target population of 245 employees of the Kakamega County Government. The respondents were selected through a combination of stratified, purposive, and systematic sampling techniques. The study focused on an eleven-year period of county administration from 2013 to 2025, coinciding with the evolution of devolved governance across the Country. Data were collected using open- and closed-ended questionnaires items and interview schedules. The instruments demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation, regression, and ANOVA, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, the findings established that employee planning significantly enhances organizational performance in public administration. Workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management each demonstrated strong positive and statistically significant relationships with organizational performance, with workforce forecasting emerging as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < .01$).The results indicated that effective employee planning improves service delivery efficiency, prudent financial management, and employee productivity. The study concluded that employee planning is an essential strategic human resource management practice for strengthening organizational performance in public sector institutions. It recommends that public administration and institutional offices should invest in robust human resource information systems, institutionalize succession planning programs, and develop comprehensive skills inventories to support evidence-based human resource decisions. Future studies should incorporate objective performance measures, including service delivery records, financial outcomes, staffing efficiency indicators, and citizen satisfaction levels.

Keywords: Employee planning, workforce forecasting, succession planning, skills inventory management, organizational performance, Public administration.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Organizational performance has become a major concern for both public and private sector organizations because of increasing demands for efficiency, accountability, sustainable service delivery, prudent resource utilization, and responsiveness within an increasingly dynamic global environment. Rapid technological advancements, globalization, demographic shifts, fiscal constraints, and rising stakeholder expectations have compelled organizations to optimize available resources to achieve strategic objectives while maintaining competitiveness and institutional sustainability (Anami, 2023; Armstrong, 2024; Ochenge, 2025; Sunel & Grundke, 2026).

Among organizational resources, human capital is widely recognized as the most valuable asset because employees' knowledge, skills, competencies, and experience constitute the foundation of organizational effectiveness and long-term success. Human Capital Theory, advanced by Schultz (1961) and Becker (1975), posits that organizations achieve superior performance by strategically investing in, developing, and effectively utilizing their workforce.

Consequently, organizations increasingly recognize employee planning as a strategic human resource management function that ensures the availability of competent employees, prepares future leaders, and aligns workforce capabilities with evolving organizational goals. Employee planning encompasses workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management, which collectively enable organizations to anticipate workforce requirements, identify competency gaps, prepare future leaders, and optimize workforce deployment (Armstrong, 2024).

Workforce forecasting facilitates the systematic estimation of current and future workforce demand and supply, enabling organizations to prevent staffing shortages, overstaffing, and skills mismatches. Succession planning focuses on identifying and developing high-potential employees to ensure leadership continuity and preserve institutional knowledge during transitions arising from retirement, promotion, resignation, or organizational restructuring (Chepngetich & Kyule, 2024; County, 2025).

Skills inventory management complements these practices by maintaining comprehensive information on employees' qualifications, competencies, experience, and training needs, thereby supporting competency-based deployment, targeted staff development, and evidence-based human resource decision-making (Armstrong, 2024; Chepngetich & Kyule, 2024; County, 2025; Dessler et al., 2025; Mutuku, 2025). Together, these dimensions strengthen workforce preparedness, improve employee productivity, enhance financial management, and promote efficient service delivery while minimizing staffing gaps and leadership disruptions.

The strategic importance of workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management is particularly evident in public administration, where governments are expected to provide efficient, equitable, and accountable public services while ensuring prudent utilization of scarce public resources. Public institutions operate within complex political, economic, technological, and demographic environments that require proactive planning to maintain adequate staffing levels, leadership continuity, and critical competencies (Dessler et al., 2025; Mutuku, 2025).

Further, employee planning has become a central component of public sector reforms aimed at strengthening institutional capacity, workforce productivity, governance, and organizational effectiveness (Mutuku, 2025; Mwanza, 2026; Sunel & Grundke, 2026). Human Capital Theory further suggests that governments capable of forecasting workforce requirements, preparing future leaders, and maintaining updated competency databases are better positioned to respond to changing policy priorities, technological innovations, and citizen expectations while sustaining organizational performance (Becker, 1975; Schultz, 1961).

From a global perspective, employee planning has emerged as a critical strategy for enhancing organizational performance by ensuring that organizations possess the appropriate workforce, leadership capacity, and competencies to achieve both current and future objectives. Globalization, technological transformation, demographic transitions, and evolving labor market dynamics have prompted organizations to integrate workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management into strategic decision-making processes (Koppenjan et al., 2022; Sunel & Grundke, 2026).

Consistent with Human Capital Theory, organizations that continuously invest in workforce planning, leadership development, and competency management are better positioned to improve operational efficiency,

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employee productivity, service quality, innovation, and long-term organizational sustainability (Akpieyi, 2024; Winterton & Cafferkey, 2019; Zolak Poljašević et al., 2025). Evidence from developed economies, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and Singapore, demonstrates that integrated employee planning enhances workforce deployment, succession readiness, leadership continuity, organizational resilience, and service delivery through proactive workforce forecasting and comprehensive competency management systems (Dessler et al., 2025; KC, 2025; Salman, 2020; Winterton & Cafferkey, 2019).

However, many developing countries continue to experience challenges that undermine the effectiveness of employee planning. Weak Human Resource Information Systems, inadequate workforce data, insufficient technical capacity, limited financial resources, and bureaucratic constraints often hinder accurate workforce forecasting, effective succession planning, and comprehensive skills inventory management within public institutions (Sunel & Grundke, 2026).

These limitations reduce organizations' ability to anticipate workforce needs, identify future leaders, maintain reliable competency databases, and align human resources with organizational priorities. Consequently, the effectiveness of employee planning varies across institutional, economic, and governance contexts, underscoring the need for context-specific empirical investigations (Kamoche et al., 2004; Koppenjan et al., 2022).

Across Africa, employee planning has increasingly been recognized as a strategic human resource management practice that strengthens organizational performance by ensuring public institutions possess adequate workforce capacity, leadership succession mechanisms, and competency management systems to deliver efficient, accountable, and quality public services. Governments have adopted workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management to improve institutional effectiveness, workforce productivity, leadership continuity, and service delivery (Fortson et al., 2021; Makhanya, 2024; Mebratie et al., 2025; Salman, 2020). Evidence from South Africa indicates that integrated employee planning supported by appropriate legislative and policy frameworks has enhanced workforce deployment, leadership continuity, succession readiness, and organizational performance, particularly in the healthcare and education sectors (Makhanya, 2024; Sylvester & Hofisi, 2025).

Nevertheless, many African countries continue to encounter challenges including fragmented Human Resource Information Systems, inadequate workforce analytics, outdated competency databases, financial constraints, political interference, and weak succession management frameworks, resulting in staffing imbalances and reduced organizational performance (Israel, 2025; Mchenga et al., 2025; Sunel & Grundke, 2026). Although employee planning is widely acknowledged as a key determinant of organizational effectiveness, its success remains dependent on institutional capacity, governance quality, and technological infrastructure, highlighting the need for empirical studies within individual countries (Zolak Poljašević et al., 2025).

In Kenya, employee planning has assumed greater significance following the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya (2010), which introduced a devolved system of governance and assigned county governments responsibility for delivering essential public services. Devolution increased the demand for competent human resources capable of promoting efficient service delivery, accountability, transparency, and sustainable institutional performance (Chisika & Yeom, 2023; Wafula et al., 2024).

In response, the Public Service Commission and the Ministry responsible for Public Service developed policies and guidelines emphasizing strategic employee planning through workforce forecasting, succession planning, and competency management as mechanisms for improving organizational effectiveness across national and county governments (County, 2025; Mutuku, 2025; Wafula et al., 2024). The County Governments Act (2012) further institutionalized employee planning by assigning County Public Service Boards responsibility for workforce planning, recruitment, staff development, deployment, succession management, and performance management (Onyango, 2024).

Despite these policy reforms, implementation remains inconsistent across many county governments because of staffing imbalances, inadequate workforce forecasting, weak succession planning systems, outdated skills inventories, limited adoption of Human Resource Information Systems, political interference, and inadequate technical and financial capacity (County, 2025; Mubarik et al., 2022; Mutuku, 2025; Mwanza, 2026; Ochenge, 2025). Although empirical evidence suggests that integrated employee planning improves service delivery, leadership continuity, workforce utilization, employee productivity, financial management, and citizen satisfaction (Chepngetich & Kyule, 2024), these persistent institutional challenges continue to undermine organizational performance within public administration and institutional offices.

Against this background, there remains limited county-specific empirical evidence on the combined contribution of workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management to organizational performance within Kenya's devolved public sector. Most previous studies have examined these dimensions independently or within broader strategic human resource management frameworks, with limited attention to their integrated influence on service delivery efficiency, financial management, and employee productivity.

This knowledge gap justifies the present study, which examined the role of employee planning in enhancing organizational performance in public administration and institutional offices by focusing on workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management as the core dimensions of employee planning. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on strategic human resource management and provide evidence to inform employee planning policies and practices aimed at strengthening institutional effectiveness, leadership continuity, workforce capability, and public service delivery within Kenya's public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments (Mwanza, 2026).

The study focused on Kakamega County Government as a suitable case for examining employee planning as a driver of organizational performance in public institutions in Kenya. As a county government operating within Kenya’s devolved system of governance, Kakamega County provides an appropriate institutional setting for assessing how employee planning practices influence the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of public service delivery. The county government performs a wide range of functions that require effective planning, deployment, utilization, development, and retention of employees across different administrative and service-delivery areas. This makes it a relevant context for examining the relationship between employee planning and organizational performance in the public sector.

Statement of the problem

Employee planning is recognized as a strategic human resource management function that enables public institutions to acquire, develop, deploy, and retain the workforce needed to achieve organizational objectives and enhance organizational performance (Armstrong, 2024; Mutuku, 2025). Through workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management, public administration and institutional offices are able to anticipate workforce requirements, ensure leadership continuity, and align employee competencies with strategic priorities.

In Kenya, the Constitution of Kenya (2010), the County Governments Act (2012), and public service human resource policies underscore the importance of strategic employee planning in strengthening institutional capacity, promoting accountability, and improving service delivery within county governments (County, 2025; Wafula et al., 2024). Nevertheless, despite these policy reforms, public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments continues to experience staffing imbalances, inadequate workforce forecasting, weak succession planning, outdated skills inventories, ineffective competency mapping, and limited utilization of Human Resource Information Systems.

These deficiencies have contributed to leadership succession gaps, employee skill mismatches, reduced workforce productivity, inefficient financial management, and declining service delivery efficiency, thereby undermining organizational performance (Mwanza, 2026; Rachel & Agui, 2024).Furthermore, although previous studies have recognized the contribution of employee planning to organizational performance, most have focused on broad human resource management practices such as recruitment, training, compensation, and performance management, with limited emphasis on the combined influence of workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management within Kenya's public administration and institutional offices (Chepngetich & Kyule, 2024; Mutuku, 2025).

Existing empirical evidence has largely examined these dimensions independently rather than as complementary strategic practices that collectively influence service delivery efficiency, financial management, and employee productivity. Consequently, this study sought to address these conceptual, contextual, and empirical gaps by examining the role of workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management in enhancing organizational performance in public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments, with the findings expected to inform strategic human resource policies, strengthen workforce management practices, and improve public service delivery within Kenya's devolved system of governance.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the role of workforce forecasting in enhancing organizational performance in public administration.
2. To examine the role of succession planning in enhancing organizational performance in public administration.
3. To analyze the role of skills Inventory Management in enhancing organizational performance in public administration.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the role of workforce forecasting in enhancing organizational performance in public administration?
2. What is the role of succession planning in enhancing organizational performance in public administration?
3. What is the role of skills inventory management in enhancing organizational performance in public administration?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, pioneered by Schultz (1961) and further developed by Becker (1975), provides the theoretical foundation for this study by conceptualizing employees' knowledge, skills, competencies, and experience as valuable forms of capital that contribute directly to organizational performance. The theory argues that organizations achieve superior outcomes by strategically investing in human resources through workforce development, training, career planning, and effective employee utilization rather than treating labor merely as a factor of production (Becker, 1975).

Contemporary human resource management scholars have extended this perspective by emphasizing that strategic investment in human capital enhances organizational capability, operational efficiency, innovation, and long-term performance (Armstrong, 2024; Dessler et al., 2025). Within public administration and institutional offices, Human Capital Theory further contends that governments can improve institutional effectiveness and citizen-centered service delivery by systematically planning, developing, and deploying competent employees to meet evolving public service demands (Sunel & Grundke, 2026). Consequently, the theory provides a robust conceptual lens for examining how strategic employee planning influences organizational performance in public sector institutions.

Building on this theoretical perspective, Human Capital Theory directly informs the conceptualization of the independent variable by explaining employee planning as a strategic investment that generates organizational value through workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management. Workforce forecasting enables organizations to anticipate future staffing requirements and align human resource capacity with strategic objectives, succession planning ensures leadership continuity and institutional knowledge retention, while skills inventory management facilitates the effective deployment of employees according to their competencies (Armstrong, 2024; Becker, 1975).

Collectively, these dimensions represent organizational investments in human capital that enhance workforce readiness, reduce competency gaps, optimize resource allocation, and strengthen institutional resilience. In the context of county governments, the theory suggests that effective employee planning enables public institutions to respond proactively to demographic, technological, fiscal, and policy changes while maintaining efficient and accountable service delivery.

Furthermore, Human Capital Theory provides a clear explanation of the dependent variable by proposing that strategic investment in human capital translates into improved organizational performance. Specifically, organizations that effectively plan, develop, and utilize their workforce are more likely to achieve efficient service delivery, prudent financial management, and higher employee productivity because competent employees are available in the right numbers, deployed to appropriate positions, and prepared to assume future organizational responsibilities (Becker, 1975; Dessler et al., 2025; Schultz, 1961).

The theory therefore establishes the causal mechanism through which employee planning enhances organizational outcomes by minimizing staffing shortages, reducing operational inefficiencies, lowering recruitment and turnover costs, and improving workforce effectiveness. This theoretical explanation aligns with the study's operationalization of organizational performance through service delivery efficiency, financial management, and employee productivity. More importantly, Human Capital Theory informed both the research design and the formulation of the study hypotheses. Conceptually, the theory predicts that strategic investment in employee planning practices produces measurable improvements in organizational performance.

Empirical Literature Review

Employee Planning, Workforce Forecasting, Succession Planning, Skills Inventory Management, and Organizational Performance

The reviewed literature consistently identifies employee planning as a strategic human resource management function that enhances organizational performance by ensuring that organizations possess the appropriate workforce, competencies, and leadership capacity to achieve both current and future organizational objectives. Employee planning encompasses workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management, which collectively facilitate the alignment of human capital with organizational strategies, improve resource utilization, strengthen institutional resilience, and promote sustainable organizational performance.

Grounded in Human Capital Theory, employee planning is viewed as a strategic investment in human resources that enhances employee productivity, service delivery, innovation, and financial performance through systematic forecasting of workforce requirements, identification of critical competencies, and development of future organizational leaders (Armstrong, 2024; Becker, 1975; Dessler et al., 2025; Schultz, 1961).

Studies conducted in developed countries consistently demonstrate that workforce forecasting significantly contributes to organizational performance by enabling organizations to anticipate workforce demand and supply, respond to demographic and technological changes, and minimize staffing shortages. For example, Rosen et al. (2018) reported that sophisticated workforce forecasting systems improved patient outcomes, reduced employee turnover, and enhanced workforce stability within the United Kingdom's National Health Service.

Similarly, studies conducted in Australia, Canada, Singapore, and the United Kingdom indicate that workforce forecasting strengthens public sector performance by facilitating proactive recruitment, competency planning, and evidence-based human resource allocation in response to changing service demands (Ali, 2026; Makhanya, 2024; Mebratie et al., 2025). These findings suggest that effective workforce forecasting enables organizations to optimize human resource deployment while improving service delivery and organizational efficiency.

Beyond forecasting workforce requirements, the literature emphasizes succession planning as a critical employee planning practice that ensures leadership continuity, preserves institutional knowledge, and enhances long-term organizational performance. Succession planning enables organizations to identify high-potential employees, prepare future leaders, and reduce operational disruptions arising from retirements, resignations, or unexpected leadership vacancies (Makhanya, 2024). According to Armstrong (2024), effective succession planning strengthens organizational sustainability by developing internal talent pipelines capable of supporting strategic organizational goals.

Likewise, Dessler et al. (2025) argue that organizations with structured succession planning programs experience improved leadership effectiveness, employee commitment, and organizational continuity because leadership transitions occur with minimal disruption. Empirical evidence from developed economies further demonstrates that succession planning improves decision-making quality, organizational adaptability, and employee retention by creating transparent career progression pathways and enhancing leadership preparedness (Ali, 2026; Mebratie et al., 2025).

The literature further recognizes skills inventory management as an essential component of employee planning that enhances organizational performance through effective competency mapping and strategic talent utilization. Skills inventories provide comprehensive information regarding employees' qualifications, experience, technical competencies, certifications, and development needs, thereby enabling organizations to deploy employees according to their capabilities and organizational priorities (Ali, 2026; Mebratie et al., 2025). Armstrong (2024) observes that maintaining updated skills inventories supports evidence-based recruitment, training, succession planning, and workforce redeployment decisions.

Similarly, Dessler et al. (2025) contend that organizations with comprehensive skills databases demonstrate greater workforce flexibility, improved talent management, and enhanced employee productivity because managers can readily identify available competencies and address emerging skill gaps through targeted development initiatives. Consequently, skills inventory management contributes to organizational effectiveness by facilitating informed human resource decisions that align employee capabilities with strategic objectives.

Conversely, evidence from developing countries presents a more nuanced perspective regarding the implementation of workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management. Although empirical studies generally confirm positive relationships between these employee planning practices and organizational performance, their effectiveness is frequently constrained by inadequate workforce data, fragmented Human Resource Information Systems, limited technical expertise, financial resource constraints, and political interference in human resource decisions (Olaniyan et al., 2025; Sunel & Grundke, 2026).

These contextual challenges limit organizations' ability to accurately forecast workforce needs, identify leadership successors, and maintain reliable employee competency databases. Unlike developed countries, where strategic employee planning is supported by advanced information systems and institutional capacity, many developing economies continue to experience implementation challenges that weaken the contribution of employee planning to organizational performance (Sunel & Grundke, 2026).

Similarly, studies conducted across Africa recognize workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management as integral components of strategic employee planning but reveal considerable disparities in implementation across public institutions. The African Union (2024) identifies strategic workforce planning and leadership development as critical mechanisms for strengthening public sector performance and improving governance. Likewise, Cho et al. (2023) and Rwigema (2023) argue that integrating workforce forecasting with succession planning and competency management enhances organizational resilience, employee productivity, and institutional sustainability.

However, Makhanya (2024) reports that fragmented human resource information systems, inadequate workforce analytics, weak succession management practices, and limited competency databases continue to undermine effective employee planning across many African public organizations. These contrasting findings suggest that institutional capacity, governance quality, and technological infrastructure largely determine the extent to which employee planning practices translate into improved organizational performance.

Within Kenya, empirical evidence similarly supports the positive influence of workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management on organizational performance. Jepngetich and Omondi (2025) found that systematic workforce forecasting improved employee productivity, service delivery efficiency, and organizational effectiveness within public institutions. Likewise, Kibet (2026) reported that succession planning enhanced leadership continuity, employee motivation, and organizational sustainability by preparing qualified internal candidates for future leadership positions.

Furthermore, studies indicate that maintaining comprehensive employee skills inventories facilitates competency-based deployment, targeted staff development, and improved utilization of human capital within county governments (Kibet, 2026). Nevertheless, Thumbi et al. (2025) observed that many county governments continue to experience staffing imbalances, weak workforce analytics, inadequate succession planning frameworks, outdated employee competency records, and political interference in staffing decisions. These institutional challenges contribute to inconsistent implementation of employee planning practices and varying levels of organizational performance across counties.

Overall, the reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that employee planning, operationalized through workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management, positively influences organizational performance by improving workforce preparedness, leadership continuity, competency utilization, employee productivity, financial management, and service delivery efficiency. Nevertheless, significant conceptual, contextual, and empirical gaps remain. Most previous studies have examined these employee planning dimensions independently or broadly within strategic human resource management without investigating their combined influence on Public Administration and institutional offices performance characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

Summary of Research Gaps

Although the reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that employee planning enhances organizational performance, significant conceptual and empirical gaps remain. Most previous studies have examined workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management as independent human resource management practices or have treated them broadly within strategic human resource management rather than as integrated dimensions of employee planning (Ali, 2026; Armstrong, 2024; Dessler et al., 2025; Makhanya, 2024; Olaniyan et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the majority of empirical evidence originates from developed countries with well-established institutional frameworks, advanced Human Resource Information Systems, and stable governance structures, limiting the applicability of these findings to developing countries characterized by resource constraints, fragmented workforce data, and institutional challenges (Ali, 2026; Armstrong, 2024; Dessler et al., 2025; Makhanya, 2024; Olaniyan et al., 2025).

Within the Kenyan context, although existing studies generally report positive relationships between employee planning practices and organizational performance, they reveal persistent implementation challenges, including inadequate workforce analytics, weak succession planning systems, outdated skills inventories, and political interference in staffing decisions (Jepngetich & Omondi, 2025; Kibet, 2026; Thumbi et al., 2025).

Moreover, limited empirical research has examined the combined influence of workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management on organizational performance using the integrated dimensions of service delivery efficiency, financial management, and employee productivity within public

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administration and institutional offices performance characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. Consequently, this study addresses these conceptual, contextual, and empirical gaps by investigating the integrated role of employee planning in enhancing organizational performance within Kenya's devolved public administration.

Conceptual framework

Guided by Human Capital theory (Becker, 1975; Schultz, 1961), the conceptual framework identifies Workforce Forecasting, Succession Planning, and Skills Inventory Management, as the independent variables and organizational performance as the dependent variable.

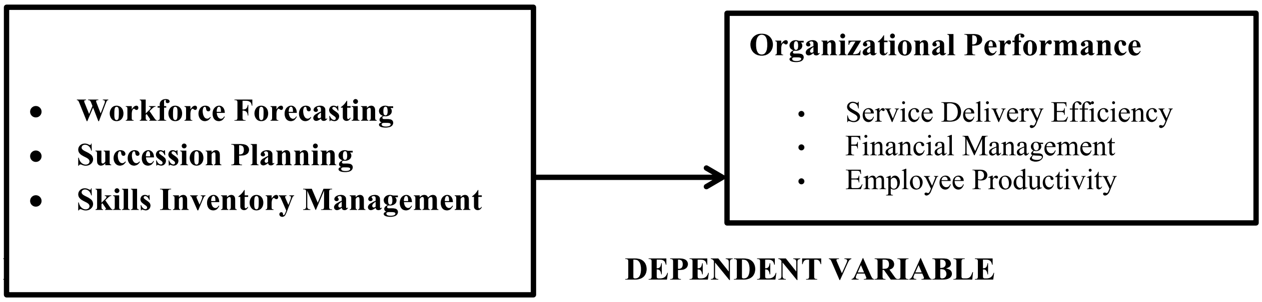

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The framework proposes that workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management, positively influences organizational performance in public administration offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. Through effective workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management, public administration offices for instance county government offices can ensure the availability of competent employees, minimize staffing shortages and surpluses, and align human resource capacity with organizational priorities.

In line with Human Capital Theory, strategic investment in workforce forecasting enhances employee productivity, improves service delivery efficiency, and strengthens financial management, thereby contributing to improved organizational performance in public administration offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. The study therefore examines the extent to which workforce forecasting influences these three dimensions of organizational performance within public administrative offices for instance County Governments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study focused on a target population of 245 senior and middle-level managers selected from Kakamega County Government Departments, including human resource management, finance, health, education, infrastructure, agriculture, and administration. These departments were purposively selected to ensure broad representation of public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. It employed a descriptive survey research design within a convergent parallel mixed-methods framework. Using Yamane's (1967) formula, a sample of 151 respondents was determined from the target population of 245 employees of the Kakamega County Government. The study focused on an eleven-year period of county administration from 2013 to 2025, coinciding with the evolution of devolved governance. The respondents were selected through a combination of stratified, purposive, and systematic sampling techniques.

The seven departments were purposively selected to ensure broad representation of public administration and institutional functions with varying administrative structures, workforce requirements, resource capacities, and service-delivery responsibilities. This diversity enabled the study to examine employee planning across different operational environments and assess its contribution to efficient resource utilization, appropriate staffing, effective service delivery, and achievement of organizational objectives. The selection of Kakamega County and the 245 managers therefore provided informed perspectives on employee planning and generated findings that can contribute to strengthening human resource management, public administration, and organizational performance within Kenya's devolved public-sector institutions.

Data were collected using open- and closed-ended questionnaires items and interview schedules. The instruments demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation, regression, and ANOVA, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis.

A descriptive survey research design appropriately integrated stratified, systematic, and purposive sampling to address the quantitative and qualitative objectives of the study. Stratified sampling ensured proportional representation of employees across administrative positions, departments, and job cadres, thereby minimizing sampling bias and enhancing the precision and generalizability of findings on employee planning, workforce forecasting, succession planning, skills inventory management, and organizational performance.

Systematic sampling was subsequently employed to select respondents from each stratum by giving every eligible employee an equal probability of selection, reducing researcher bias and generating a representative sample for statistical analysis. Structured questionnaires were used to collect standardized quantitative data, enabling the examination of relationships between employee planning practices and organizational performance.

Furthermore, purposive sampling was adopted for the qualitative component to deliberately select knowledgeable key informants, including County Chief Officers, Directors of Human Resource, Human Resource Officers, Departmental Managers, Chief Finance Officers, Public Service Board Members, and the County Secretary, whose expertise in strategic human resource management provided rich contextual insights. Data collected through interview guides were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, organizational practices, implementation challenges, and explanations underlying the quantitative findings.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence through methodological triangulation strengthened the validity, reliability, and credibility of the study by corroborating statistical results with participants' experiences and expert perspectives, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of how employee planning, workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management influence organizational performance in public administration.

Ethical standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and approval from NACOSTI, were observed throughout the study. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, where descriptive statistics summarized respondent characteristics, while Pearson correlation and other inferential statistics examined the relationship between employee planning practices and organizational performance. Quantitative findings were presented in tables, whereas qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

Justification for Focusing on Kakamega County

The study focused on Kakamega County Government because it provides a suitable setting for examining employee planning and its influence on organizational performance within Kenya's devolved system of governance. The county performs diverse public functions requiring effective workforce planning, deployment, utilization, development, and retention. The study targeted 245 senior and middle-level managers from Human Resource Management, Finance, Health, Education, Infrastructure, Agriculture, and Administration because these officers are directly involved in strategic workforce decisions and the implementation of employee planning practices. Their positions provided relevant insights into staffing, resource allocation, employee development, performance management, and organizational effectiveness.

The seven departments were purposively selected to ensure broad representation of public administration and institutional functions with varying administrative structures, workforce requirements, resource capacities, and service-delivery responsibilities. This diversity enabled the study to examine employee planning across different operational environments and assess its contribution to efficient resource utilization, appropriate staffing, effective service delivery, and achievement of organizational objectives. The selection of Kakamega County and the 245 managers therefore provided informed perspectives on employee planning and generated findings that can contribute to strengthening human resource management, public administration, and organizational performance within Kenya's devolved public-sector institutions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The response rate referred to the proportion of the sampled respondents who completed and returned the questionnaire. A high response rate was important to ensure that the findings were representative of the target population. Table 1 presents the response rate achieved in this study.

Table 1: Response Rate

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaire distributed	151	100
Questionnaire returned	138	91.4
Questionnaire not returned	13	8.6

The study distributed 151 questionnaires to senior and middle-level managers in Kakamega County Government. Out of these, 138 questionnaires were completed and returned, representing a response rate of 91.4 percent. Thirteen questionnaires were not returned, accounting for 8.6 percent of the sample. This response rate was considered excellent for social science research and was sufficient for data analysis and generalization of findings.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study. The characteristics examined included gender, age bracket, level of education, department, years of service, and job category.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male Female	82 56	59.4 40.6
Age Bracket	25-34 years 35-44 years 45-54 years 55-years and above	28 54 41 15	20.3 39.1 29.7 10.9
Level of Education	Diploma Bachelor degree Masters Doctorate	17 72 46 3	12.3 52.2 33.3 2.2
Years of service	Less than 2 years 2-5 years 6-9 years 10 years & above	11 35 48 44	8.0 25.4 34.8 31.8
Job categories	Senior managers Middle level managers	45 93	32.6 67.4
Health Department	Respondents	22	15.9

The findings showed that male respondents were 82 representing 59.4 percent while female respondents were 56 representing 40.6 percent. The largest age group was 35 to 44 years with 54 respondents representing 39.1 percent. The majority of respondents held a bachelor's degree with 72 representing 52.2 percent. The health department had the highest representation with 22 respondents or 15.9 percent. The largest group of respondents had served for 6 to 9 years with 48 representing 34.8 percent. Middle-level managers were 93 representing 67.4 percent while senior managers were 45 representing 32.6 percent.

Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

This section presents the descriptive statistics for my study variables. For each variable, respondents rated their level of agreement with statements on a five-point Likert scale where 1 represented Strongly Disagree, 2 represented Disagree, 3 represented Neutral, 4 represented Agree, and 5 represented Strongly Agree. The mean and standard deviation were calculated for each variable overall.

The descriptive findings revealed that workforce forecasting recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.92$), indicating that respondents generally agreed that workforce forecasting practices were relatively well established across public administration offices.This finding implies that public administration officers characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments have made significant efforts to project future workforce needs, align human resource capacity with organizational objectives, and prepare for evolving service delivery demands.

The relatively higher adoption of workforce forecasting may be attributed to the implementation of public sector human resource planning policies that emphasize staffing projections and workforce allocation to improve service delivery. The finding supports Human Capital Theory, which posits that organizations that proactively plan their workforce are better positioned to optimize employee productivity and organizational performance through strategic investment in human resources (Becker, 1975; Schultz, 1961).

The result is consistent with previous studies that reported workforce forecasting as a significant contributor to organizational effectiveness by facilitating proactive recruitment, reducing staffing shortages, improving workforce deployment, and enhancing service delivery efficiency (Armstrong, 2024; Jepngetich & Omondi, 2025; Rosen et al., 2018).

The findings further showed that succession planning recorded a mean score of 3.56 ($SD = 0.97$), suggesting that respondents moderately agreed that succession planning practices in public administration offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. Although succession planning appeared to be implemented to some extent, the moderate rating indicates that structured leadership development and talent succession programs have not yet been fully institutionalized across the public offices in government. This observation is reinforced by the regression results, which demonstrated that succession planning had a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. ($\beta = 0.345$, $t = 4.65$).

The finding implies that strengthening succession planning would significantly improve organizational performance by ensuring leadership continuity, preserving institutional knowledge, and preparing competent employees to assume critical leadership positions. The results are consistent with Human Capital Theory, which emphasizes continuous investment in employee development to sustain organizational competitiveness (Becker, 1975; Schultz, 1961).

They also corroborate Armstrong (2024) and Dessler et al. (2025), who argue that organizations with well-structured succession planning systems experience smoother leadership transitions, greater employee commitment, and improved organizational sustainability. Similarly, Kibet (2026) reported that succession planning enhances employee motivation, leadership preparedness, and institutional resilience by creating transparent career progression pathways and reducing disruptions associated with leadership vacancies.

Regarding skills inventory management, the findings indicated the lowest mean score of 3.36 ($SD = 1.04$), suggesting that respondents perceived competency mapping and maintenance of employee skills databases as the least developed employee planning practice in public offices. This finding implies that although some mechanisms for documenting employee competencies exist, comprehensive skills inventory systems remain inadequately developed, potentially limiting effective deployment of personnel, identification of skills gaps, and evidence-based human resource decision-making.

Nevertheless, the regression analysis established that skills inventory management exerted a positive and statistically significant influence on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.287$, $t = 2.84$).This finding demonstrates that improvements in skills inventory management are associated with enhanced employee productivity, efficient workforce deployment, better training decisions, and improved service delivery. The result supports Armstrong (2024), who argues that comprehensive skills inventories enable organizations to align employee competencies with strategic organizational needs while facilitating succession planning, workforce redeployment, and targeted capacity development.

Likewise, Dessler et al. (2025) contend that organizations maintaining accurate employee competency databases demonstrate greater workforce flexibility, improved talent management, and higher organizational effectiveness because managers can readily identify existing expertise and address competency gaps through strategic training and development initiatives.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Variables	Unstandardized coefficient (B)	Standard error	Standardized coefficient (B)	t	P-value
Constant	0.487	0.143		3.41	0.001
Workforce forecasting	0.386	0.067	0.412	5.76	0.000
Succession planning	0.321	0.069	0.345	4.65	0.000
Skill inventory management	0.247	0.087	0.287	2.84	0.005

R = 0.827, R Square = 0.684, Adjusted R Square = 0.677, F (3,134) = 94.56, $p < 0.001$

The regression analysis results conducted showed that the model was statistically significant, F (3, 134) = 94.56, $p < 0.001$. The R Square value was 0.684, meaning that 68.4 percent of the variance in organizational performance was explained by workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management. The multiple regression analysis established that the employee planning model was statistically significant, F (3, 134) = 94.56, $p < .001$, indicating that workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management jointly explained variations in organizational performance within public offices.

The model yielded an R^2 of 0.684, implying that 68.4% of the variation in organizational performance was explained by the three employee planning dimensions, while the remaining 31.6% was attributable to other factors not included in the model. The findings affirm the central proposition of Human Capital Theory that strategic investment in workforce planning, leadership development, and competency management enhances organizational performance by improving the quality, capability, and effective utilization of human resources (Becker, 1975; Schultz, 1961).

The findings further revealed that workforce forecasting exerted the strongest positive and statistically significant influence on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.412$, $t = 5.76$, $p < .001$). This implies that improving workforce forecasting practices significantly enhances service delivery efficiency, employee productivity, and financial management within public administration characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. The finding suggests that accurately anticipating future staffing requirements enables organizations to minimize workforce shortages, allocate human resources efficiently, and respond proactively to changing service demands.

These findings are consistent with Armstrong (2024), who argues that workforce forecasting enables organizations to align workforce supply with strategic objectives while minimizing operational disruptions. Similarly, Rosen et al. (2018) reported that effective workforce forecasting improved workforce stability, reduced staff turnover, and enhanced service delivery within the United Kingdom's National Health Service.

Comparable findings by Jepngetich and Omondi (2025) and Kibet (2026) demonstrated that systematic workforce forecasting improves employee productivity, organizational effectiveness, and public service delivery through proactive staffing decisions and strategic workforce deployment.

The regression results also established that succession planning had a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.345$, $t = 4.65$, $p < .001$), indicating that strengthening succession planning contributes significantly to improved organizational performance.The findings imply that organizations that identify, develop, and prepare employees for future leadership positions are better able to ensure leadership continuity, preserve institutional memory, reduce disruptions associated with leadership transitions, and sustain organizational effectiveness in public offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

The positive influence of succession planning supports Human Capital Theory, which emphasizes continuous investment in employee development as a means of strengthening organizational capability and long-term competitiveness (Becker, 1975; Schultz, 1961). The findings concur with Armstrong (2024), who contends that effective succession planning creates a sustainable leadership pipeline capable of supporting organizational continuity and strategic growth. Likewise, Dessler et al. (2025) observed that organizations with structured succession planning programs experience smoother leadership transitions, stronger employee commitment, and improved institutional sustainability.

The findings further corroborate Kibet (2026), who reported that succession planning enhances leadership preparedness, employee motivation, and organizational resilience by ensuring that qualified internal candidates are available to fill critical positions when vacancies arise. Similarly, skills inventory management was found to have a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.287$, $t = 2.84$, $p = .005$).

Although its standardized coefficient was comparatively lower than those of workforce forecasting and succession planning, the findings demonstrate that maintaining comprehensive employee competency records remains an important determinant of organizational performance. Effective skills inventory management enables organizations to identify existing competencies, detect skill gaps, facilitate competency-based deployment, and design targeted training and development programs that enhance employee productivity and service delivery.

These findings support Armstrong (2024), who argues that comprehensive skills inventories provide managers with reliable information for workforce deployment, succession planning, and strategic talent management. Similarly, Dessler et al. (2025) assert that organizations with well-maintained competency databases achieve greater workforce flexibility, improved utilization of employee expertise, and more effective human resource planning because management decisions are based on accurate information regarding employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities.

The findings are also consistent with Human Capital Theory, which maintains that organizations derive sustainable competitive advantage by investing in and effectively utilizing employees' competencies to improve organizational productivity and performance (Becker, 1975; Schultz, 1961).Overall, the regression findings demonstrate that workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management each make significant and complementary contributions to organizational performance.

However, workforce forecasting emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by succession planning and skills inventory management. These findings underscore the importance of adopting an integrated employee planning approach that combines proactive workforce forecasting, structured leadership succession, and comprehensive competency management to enhance service delivery efficiency, financial management, and employee productivity within public administration sector.

Qualitative Analysis of Open-Ended Questionnaires Items and Interview Schedules.

These findings were reinforced by qualitative responses gathered through open-ended questionnaires items and interview schedules with County Chief Officers, Directors of Human Resource, Human Resource

Officers, Departmental Managers, Chief Finance Officers, Public Service Board Members and County Secretaries.

Objective 1: To examine the role of employee planning in enhancing organizational performance in public administration

The study sought to examine the role of employee planning in enhancing organizational performance in public administration. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires items and interview schedules with County Chief Officers, Directors of Human Resources, Human Resource Officers, Departmental Managers, Chief Finance Officers, Public Service Board Members, and the County Secretary. The interview data and open-ended items were analyzed thematically, resulting in the highlighted major themes.

Interview Responses for Objective One

Interview Excerpt: P1 (County Chief Officer)

Interviewer: What role does employee planning play in organizational performance?

Participant:

"Employee planning is one of the most critical functions in public administration. When staffing needs are properly anticipated, departments maintain continuity of service and minimize disruptions. We have observed that departments with proper workforce planning experience improved efficiency because employees are deployed where they are most needed. Planning also reduces unnecessary recruitment costs and prevents duplication of responsibilities".

Interview Excerpt: P2 (Director of Human Resource)

Participant:

"Human resource planning enables the organization to match employee competencies with institutional objectives. Without employee planning, organizations often experience staff shortages in critical departments while others become overstaffed. Proper planning improves accountability, service delivery, and overall organizational productivity".

Interview Excerpt: P5 (Senior Administrative Officer)

Participant:

"Employee planning provides direction for recruitment, training, promotion, and deployment. It ensures the organization has the right people at the right time. In my experience, departments that practice strategic workforce planning complete projects faster and experience fewer operational delays".

Thematic Analysis for Objective One

Theme 1: Strategic Workforce Alignment

Most respondents indicated that employee planning aligns workforce capabilities with institutional objectives. Participants noted that identifying staffing requirements early enables departments to allocate personnel effectively while ensuring continuity in public service delivery.

Respondents Quotes

"Employee planning helps us place the right people in the right positions before service gaps emerge." (P2)

"Strategic planning allows every department to understand future staffing

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Requirements." (P1)

Theme 2: Improved Organizational Efficiency

Participants consistently emphasized that effective employee planning minimizes duplication of duties while enhancing coordination among departments.

Respondents Quotes

"When positions are properly planned, work flows smoothly because everyone understands their responsibilities." (P4)

"Employee planning has significantly reduced unnecessary delays in our operations." (P5)

Theme 3: Better Resource Utilization

Respondents explained that employee planning contributes to efficient utilization of financial and human resources by avoiding unnecessary recruitment and reducing employee shortages.

Respondents Quotes

"Planning enables management to use existing staff more efficiently before considering new recruitment." (P6)

"Good planning prevents overstaffing in one department and understaffing in another." (P3)

Objective 2: To examine the role of succession planning in enhancing organizational performance in public administration.

The study sought to examine the role of succession planning in enhancing organizational performance in public administration. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires items and interview schedules with County Chief Officers, Directors of Human Resource, Human Resource Officers, Departmental Managers, Chief Finance Officers, Public Service Board Members and County Secretaries. The interview data and open-ended items were analyzed thematically, resulting in the four major themes.

Interview Responses for Objective Two

P1: County Chief Officer

Interviewer: In your opinion, what role does succession planning play in enhancing organizational performance?

Participant:

"Succession planning is essential because leadership transitions are inevitable. Whenever we identify and prepare potential leaders early, departments continue operating without interruptions. It helps preserve institutional memory and ensures that strategic programs remain on course despite changes in leadership."

P2: Director of Human Resource

Participant:

"Our succession planning process enables us to identify employees with leadership potential and prepare them through mentoring, training, and job rotation. This reduces recruitment costs for senior positions and strengthens continuity in service delivery."

P3: Human Resource Officer

Participant:

"Without succession planning, organizations struggle whenever experienced officers retire or leave unexpectedly. We sometimes experience delays because suitable replacements have not been adequately prepared."

P4: Departmental Manager

Participant:

"Succession planning motivates employees because they know there are opportunities for career progression. Employees become more committed when leadership development programs are transparent and merit-based."

P5: Chief Finance Officer

Participant:

"From a financial perspective, succession planning reduces the costs associated with external recruitment. Internal promotions shorten induction periods since promoted officers already understand organizational systems and procedures."

P6: Public Service Board Member

Participant:

"The County Public Service Board encourages departments to identify critical positions and develop potential successors. This has improved leadership stability and reduced operational disruptions whenever vacancies occur."

P7: County Secretary

Participant:

"Organizations that fail to plan for leadership succession often experience loss of institutional knowledge. Succession planning safeguards continuity because experienced officers mentor future leaders before exiting the organization."

Thematic Analysis for Objective Two

After coding and categorizing interview responses, four major themes emerged.

Theme 1: Leadership Continuity

Most participants agreed that succession planning enhances organizational performance by ensuring continuity of leadership whenever senior positions become vacant. Respondents explained that identifying and preparing future leaders minimizes service interruptions and enables departments to maintain operational stability.

Respondents Quotes:

"Prepared successors ensure that organizational programs continue without interruption." (P1)

"Leadership vacancies no longer create major operational challenges because successors are identified early." (P6)

"Succession planning promotes organizational stability during leadership transitions." (P7)

The findings suggest that succession planning contributes to organizational performance by reducing uncertainty during leadership transitions and maintaining continuity in strategic decision-making.

Theme 2: Employee Development and Career Growth

Participants indicated that succession planning provides structured opportunities for employee development through mentoring, coaching, leadership training, and job rotation.

Respondents Quotes:

"Employees become more committed because they see opportunities for advancement." (P4)

"Leadership development programs prepare future managers well before vacancies arise." (P2)

Respondents viewed succession planning as an important employee development strategy that strengthens leadership capacity while improving employee motivation and organizational commitment.

Theme 3: Institutional Knowledge Retention

Several respondents emphasized that succession planning preserves institutional memory by facilitating knowledge transfer between experienced leaders and future successors.

Respondents Quotes:

"Outgoing officers mentor future leaders before retirement." (P7)

"Institutional experience is retained instead of being lost whenever senior officers leave." (P1)

The findings indicate that succession planning safeguards organizational knowledge, thereby improving decision-making consistency and long-term organizational sustainability.

Theme 4: Improved Organizational Efficiency

Participants explained that succession planning improves efficiency by reducing recruitment costs, shortening transition periods, and enabling quicker adaptation by newly appointed leaders.

Respondents Quotes:

"Internal promotions reduce recruitment costs significantly." (P5)

"Departments recover faster because successors already understand organizational procedures." (P2)

"Prepared leaders require minimal orientation compared to external recruits." (P3)

The respondents perceived succession planning as contributing to improved organizational performance by increasing operational efficiency, reducing administrative costs, and enhancing service delivery.

Objective 3: To analyze the role of skills Inventory Management in enhancing organizational performance in public administration.

The study sought to analyze the role of skills inventory management in enhancing organizational performance in public administration. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires items and interview schedules with County Chief Officers, Directors of Human Resource, Human Resource Officers, Departmental Managers, Chief Finance Officers, Public Service Board Members and County Secretaries. The interview data and open-ended items were analyzed thematically, resulting in six major themes.

Interview Responses for Objective Three

Theme 1: Improved Employee Deployment and Optimal Utilization of Skills

Most participants indicated that maintaining an updated skills inventory enabled management to identify employees' competencies and deploy them to positions where their expertise could be effectively utilized. They noted that proper alignment between employees' qualifications, skills, and job responsibilities improved operational efficiency and reduced instances of underutilization of staff.

A County Chief Officer remarked:

"A comprehensive skills inventory enables us to know who possesses specific technical and managerial competencies. This has significantly improved staff deployment because employees are assigned duties that match their expertise."

Similarly, a Human Resource Officer observed:

"When employee skills are properly documented, it becomes easier to identify suitable officers for specialized assignments without relying on assumptions or personal familiarity."

Participants generally agreed that effective deployment of skilled employees contributed to improved productivity, faster service delivery, and enhanced departmental performance.

Theme 2: Identification of Competency Gaps and Capacity Development

Interviewees consistently emphasized that skills inventory management provides management with reliable information for identifying competency gaps across departments. The findings revealed that periodic assessment of employee competencies informs training needs assessments and supports evidence-based staff development initiatives.

A Director of Human Resources explained:

"Our skills inventory highlights areas where employees require additional competencies. Training decisions are therefore based on actual organizational needs rather than general assumptions."

A Departmental Manager added:

"The inventory has helped us prioritize professional development because we clearly understand which competencies are lacking within each unit."

Participants indicated that targeted capacity-building initiatives had strengthened employee competencies, improved work quality, and enhanced organizational effectiveness.

Theme 3: Enhanced Workforce Planning and Succession Management

Most respondents reported that skills inventory management supports strategic workforce planning by identifying employees with leadership potential and specialized competencies required for future organizational needs. Participants indicated that updated competency records facilitate succession planning and reduce disruptions arising from employee retirement, transfers, or promotions.

A Public Service Board Member stated:

"Skills inventory information enables the county to identify officers who can assume higher responsibilities whenever vacancies arise, ensuring continuity of service."

Likewise, the County Secretary noted:

"Without an updated skills database, succession planning becomes difficult because management lacks objective information regarding employees' competencies and readiness for leadership."

Participants agreed that integrating skills inventory management with succession planning enhanced organizational stability and leadership continuity.

Theme 4: Improved Human Resource Decision-Making

Respondents observed that comprehensive skills inventory records improved the quality of human resource decisions relating to recruitment, promotions, transfers, deployment, and performance management. The availability of accurate competency data reduced subjectivity and promoted transparency in personnel management.

A Chief Finance Officer commented:

"Human resource decisions are more objective when supported by accurate competency records because management can justify deployment and promotion decisions using documented evidence."

Similarly, a Human Resource Director remarked:

"The inventory provides credible information that supports strategic planning and reduces bias during staffing decisions."

Participants believed that evidence-based human resource decisions enhanced employee confidence, accountability, and organizational efficiency.

Theme 5: Improved Organizational Performance and Service Delivery

Nearly all interviewees indicated that effective skills inventory management positively influenced organizational performance by improving employee productivity, service quality, responsiveness, and operational efficiency. Participants explained that appropriate utilization of employee competencies minimized duplication of responsibilities and accelerated service delivery.

A Departmental Manager stated:

"Departments perform better when employees are assigned duties that correspond with their competencies because work is completed more efficiently and with fewer errors."

Another County Chief Officer observed:

"The county has experienced improvements in service delivery because managers now utilize available expertise more effectively."

The respondents generally associated skills inventory management with improved service delivery, better financial management, and increased organizational productivity.

Theme 6: Challenges Limiting Effective Skills Inventory Management

Although participants acknowledged the benefits of skills inventory management, they identified several implementation challenges. These included outdated employee records, inadequate automation of Human Resource Information Systems, limited financial resources, inconsistent updating of competency databases, and insufficient managerial commitment.

A Human Resource Officer explained:

"Our biggest challenge is maintaining current employee competency records because updates are not conducted consistently."

A Public Service Board Member added:

"Investment in digital human resource systems would greatly improve the accuracy and accessibility of employee skills information."

Participants recommended regular competency audits, continuous updating of skills databases, integration of Human Resource Information Systems, increased budgetary allocation for human resource management, and continuous management support to strengthen skills inventory management.

Overall Qualitative Findings from open-ended Questionnaires items and Interview Schedules.

The thematic analysis revealed that respondents consistently perceived employee planning, encompassing workforce forecasting, skills inventory management, and succession planning, as a strategic human resource management practice that significantly enhances organizational performance in public administration. Across interviews with County Chief Officers, Directors of Human Resources, Human Resource Officers, Departmental Managers, Chief Finance Officers, Public Service Board Members, and the County Secretary, three interrelated themes emerged. First, workforce forecasting was viewed as essential for anticipating staffing requirements, facilitating timely recruitment, reducing employee shortages, and ensuring optimal workforce allocation in public offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

Respondents indicated that effective workforce forecasting minimized service interruptions, improved budget planning through better personnel cost projections, and enhanced employee productivity by ensuring that departments maintained adequate staffing levels in public offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. These findings concur with Armstrong (2024), who argues that workforce forecasting enables organizations to anticipate future human resource requirements and align workforce capacity with strategic objectives.

Similarly, Mutuku (2025) contends that proactive workforce forecasting enhances operational efficiency by ensuring the availability of the right employees with the right competencies at the right time. Second, skills inventory management was identified as a critical mechanism for documenting employee competencies, identifying skills gaps, supporting evidence-based deployment, and informing training and development decisions in public offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

Participants emphasized that maintaining an updated skills inventory enabled managers to assign employees according to their competencies, optimize workforce utilization, strengthen succession management, and improve decision-making regarding promotions, transfers, and capacity development. Consequently, these practices enhanced service delivery efficiency, improved financial management through reduced duplication of roles and targeted training investments, and increased employee productivity by aligning individual competencies with organizational responsibilities in public offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

These findings are consistent with the Resource-Based View, which recognizes employee competencies as valuable strategic resources that enhance organizational effectiveness through efficient deployment and continuous development (Armstrong, 2024). They also support the findings of Wafula et al. (2024), who reported that competency mapping and effective skills inventory management improve workforce utilization, employee productivity, and service delivery in public institutions.

Furthermore, respondents consistently described succession planning as a strategic practice that promotes leadership continuity, employee development, institutional knowledge retention, and long-term organizational sustainability. Participants observed that structured succession planning reduced leadership disruptions, prepared competent employees for future managerial responsibilities, preserved institutional memory, and minimized recruitment and induction costs associated with replacing senior personnel in public offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

These observations are supported by Armstrong (2024), who notes that succession planning ensures organizational continuity by preparing high-potential employees to assume critical leadership positions, while Mutuku (2025) emphasizes that systematic succession planning strengthens institutional resilience and improves long-term organizational performance. Collectively, respondents agreed that the integration of workforce forecasting, skills inventory management, and succession planning strengthened organizational capacity by ensuring the availability of competent employees, improving strategic resource allocation, enhancing accountability, and promoting continuous service delivery in public offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

Nevertheless, participants identified several challenges that constrained the effectiveness of employee planning, including outdated competency records, inadequate human resource information systems, inconsistent updating of employee databases, financial resource limitations, and insufficient management commitment. Similar implementation challenges have been documented by Wafula et al. (2024), who observed that inadequate digital human resource systems and weak institutional support hinder strategic workforce planning within Kenya's county governments.

These qualitative findings corroborate the quantitative results, which established that workforce forecasting, skills inventory management, and succession planning each had a positive and statistically significant influence on organizational performance of public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments. The findings further support the propositions of the Resource-Based View and Strategic Human Resource Management literature that organizations achieve superior performance when employee planning practices are strategically integrated to optimize human capital and align workforce capabilities with organizational objectives (Armstrong, 2024; Mutuku, 2025).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first objective of the study was to determine the effect of workforce forecasting on organizational performance in public administration offices. The findings revealed that workforce forecasting had a positive and significant effect on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$). This finding was consistent with previous studies by Jepngetich and Omondi, (2025) who found that workforce forecasting had a significant positive effect on organizational performance in Kenyan public administration offices, and by Kibet (2026) who reported a strong positive relationship between workforce forecasting and employee productivity. The finding was also consistent with Human Capital Theory, which suggested that investing in workforce forecasting enabled organizations to anticipate their human capital needs and allocate resources accordingly in public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

The results also established that succession planning had a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.345$, $t = 4.65$, $p < .001$), indicating that strengthening succession planning contributes significantly to improved organizational performance. The findings imply that organizations that identify, develop, and prepare employees for future leadership positions are better able to ensure leadership continuity, preserve institutional memory, reduce disruptions associated with leadership transitions, and sustain organizational effectiveness in public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

The positive influence of succession planning supports Human Capital Theory, which emphasizes continuous investment in employee development as a means of strengthening organizational capability and long-term competitiveness (Becker, 1975; Schultz, 1961). The findings concur with Armstrong (2024), who contends that effective succession planning creates a sustainable leadership pipeline capable of supporting organizational continuity and strategic growth. Likewise, Dessler et al. (2025) observed that organizations with structured succession planning programs experience smoother leadership transitions, stronger employee commitment, and improved institutional sustainability in public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

The findings further corroborate Kibet (2026), who reported that succession planning enhances leadership preparedness, employee motivation, and organizational resilience by ensuring that qualified internal candidates are available to fill critical positions when vacancies arise in public administration offices.

Similarly, skills inventory management was found to have a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.287$, $t = 2.84$, $p = .005$). Although its standardized coefficient was comparatively lower than those of workforce forecasting and succession planning, the findings demonstrate that maintaining comprehensive employee competency records remains an important determinant of organizational performance. Effective skills inventory management enables organizations to identify existing competencies, detect skill gaps, facilitate competency-based deployment, and design targeted training and development programs that enhance employee productivity and service delivery in public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

These findings support Armstrong (2024), who argues that comprehensive skills inventories provide managers with reliable information for workforce deployment, succession planning, and strategic talent management in public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

Similarly, Dessler et al. (2025) assert that organizations with well-maintained competency databases achieve greater workforce flexibility, improved utilization of employee expertise, and more effective human resource planning because management decisions are based on accurate information regarding employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities in public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

The findings are also consistent with Human Capital Theory, which maintains that organizations derive sustainable competitive advantage by investing in and effectively utilizing employees' competencies to improve organizational productivity and performance (Becker, 1975; Schultz, 1961).Overall, the regression findings demonstrate that workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management each make significant and complementary contributions to organizational performance in public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the literature establishes that employee planning, comprising workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management, is a strategic human resource management practice that enhances organizational performance in public administration. Guided by Human Capital Theory and the Resource-Based View, these employee planning dimensions enable organizations to anticipate workforce needs, ensure leadership continuity, optimize employee competencies, and support evidence-based human resource decision-making, thereby improving organizational resilience and effectiveness (Armstrong, 2024; Barney, 1991; Mutuku, 2025).

Within public administration offices, the integration of workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management is expected to strengthen institutional capacity, improve service delivery efficiency, enhance financial management, and increase employee productivity, ultimately supporting sustainable organizational performance and the achievement of strategic goals in Kenya's devolved public administration (Wafula et al., 2024).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation for Practice

Based on the study findings and reviewed literature, public management should institutionalize strategic employee planning by strengthening workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management through competency mapping, workforce analytics, regular workforce needs assessments, and modern Human Resource Information Systems (Armstrong, 2024; Mutuku, 2025). Guided by Human Capital Theory, these integrated employee planning practices will enable public administration to anticipate workforce requirements, address competency gaps, optimize employee deployment, ensure leadership continuity, and support evidence-based human resource decision-making.

Consequently, strengthening workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management is expected to improve service delivery efficiency, financial management, and employee productivity, thereby enhancing organizational performance in public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments in Kenya (Wafula et al., 2024).

Implications

Policy Implications

The study has significant policy implications for human resource management in Kenya's devolved public administration. Public administration offices should institutionalize workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management as core elements of strategic workforce planning by aligning human resource requirements with development priorities, budget allocations, and service delivery objectives. The Public Service Commission and County Public Service Boards should establish standardized policies that promote competency-based workforce planning, leadership succession, skills inventory management, and the adoption of Human Resource Information Systems and workforce analytics to support evidence-based decision-making.

Guided by Human Capital Theory, these policy interventions are expected to enhance service delivery efficiency, financial management, and employee productivity, thereby strengthening organizational performance across public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments in Kenya (Armstrong, 2024; Mutuku, 2025; Wafula et al., 2024).

Managerial Implications

The study has important managerial implications for senior managers, County Public Service Boards, Chief Officers, and Human Resource Managers in public institutions in Kenya. Managers should institutionalize workforce forecasting, succession planning, and skills inventory management by integrating these practices into strategic planning, budgeting, and human resource decision-making through regular workforce assessments, competency mapping, Human Resource Information Systems, and workforce analytics. Guided by Human Capital Theory, these practices will facilitate leadership continuity, optimize employee deployment, address competency gaps, preserve institutional knowledge, and support evidence-based decision-making. Furthermore, managers should continuously monitor employee planning using service delivery efficiency, financial management, and employee productivity indicators to strengthen organizational performance, accountability, and public service delivery within Kenya's devolved system (Armstrong, 2024; Mutuku, 2025; Wafula et al., 2024).

Theoretical Implications

The study highlights that managers in public institutions and government should institutionalize strategic employee planning by integrating workforce forecasting into planning, budgeting, and decision-making through regular workforce assessments, Human Resource Information Systems, and workforce analytics. Guided by Human Capital Theory, managers should also strengthen succession planning, maintain comprehensive skills inventories, and invest in competency development to optimize employee deployment, preserve institutional knowledge, and ensure leadership continuity.

Furthermore, continuous performance monitoring using service delivery efficiency, financial management, and employee productivity indicators should guide evidence-based human resource decisions. Collectively, these managerial practices are expected to improve organizational performance, strengthen accountability, and enhance public service delivery within public administration and institutional offices characterized by varying administrative structures, resource capacities, and political environments in Kenya's devolved system of governance.

Areas for Further Research

Future studies should incorporate objective performance measures, including service delivery records, financial outcomes, staffing efficiency indicators, and citizen satisfaction levels. Such research would extend the application of Human Capital Theory and provide additional evidence to inform human resource policy and practice in Kenya's devolved public administration (Armstrong, 2024; Mutuku, 2025; Wafula et al., 2024).

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