

# **INFLUENCE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH SECTOR IN KENYA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of career development on engagement of employee in the public health sector in Kenya. The study's theoretical framework drew from Super's career development theory. The study adopted a descriptive research design and was guided by positivism philosophy and the deductive method. The target population were 3,092 respondents with a sample size of 342 respondents, drawn from two different cohorts of 35 doctors and 307 nurses. Stratified and basic random sampling techniques were used to choose the sample. A questionnaire was used as a method for data collection to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data types. A mixed method approach was used, and data analysis was realized using both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. Using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, quantitative information was edited, coded, and analysed. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were given by descriptive analysis. Correlation, basic and

multiple linear regression analyses were used to base inferential statistics. The findings obtained indicated that career development had a positive moderate and significant influence ( $r=0.670$ ,  $p<0.000$ ,  $R^2=0.449$ ), on employee engagement in the public health sector in Kenya. The study concludes that when career development is low or not provided to nurses and doctors within the public health sector, their engagement level will decrease. Failure to implement diverse and supported career development programs and learning opportunities could cost the sector a lot in terms of decreased engagement affecting service delivery and performance. The study recommends that the public health sector should adopt career management policies that take into account equal opportunity for learning and upgrading, create awareness of the same and provide management support through scholarships.

**Key words:** Career development, Employee engagement, career plans, career progression, learning opportunities

## **INTRODUCTION**

Career development activities have attracted attentiveness of notable scholars as an important relational reward aiding organizations for augmenting employee engagement. Career development is concerned with providing opportunity for employees to develop and progress their careers through a series of stages and ensuring that the organization has the flow of talents it needs (Noe, 2009). Focus has shifted from identifying successors for posts towards developing those successors by creating talent pools and organizations are using career development as a formal approach to achieving this goal (Mondy & Martocchio 2016). When the organization provides opportunities for career development through effective career planning, job growth

opportunities and learning and development, employees feel more motivated, empowered, and connected with their work and the organization (Kong, Wang, & Fu, 2015).

Reviewed Studies revealed that career development activities can have a notable influence on employee engagement. For instance, Bai and Liu (2018) ; Liu, He, and Yu (2017) reckoned that career development had a significant effect on employee engagement. Similarly, Nyandema and Were (2014), in their study, posit that career development management and coaching/mentoring are the viable components of employee engagement. In support with this view, Son and Kim (2019) reckoned that organizations that apply career development as an intrinsic function positively correlates with work engagement.

Employee engagement according to Vellya, Pio, and Rumawas (2020) is a condition in which there is a sense of commitment, passion, enthusiasm and energy from employee towards their work. Similarly, Lubis & Wulandari, (2018) argue that where employees have a sense of emotional attachment to their work and organization and are capable and motivated to give their best in term of helping the success of the organization and colleagues, then they are engaged. Lelebici (2012) coined that it is in the best interest of organizations to seek ways of intensifying employee engagement to ensure that employees act in harmonious ways with their objectives and goals.

Disengaged workers can affect organizational efficiency through higher turnover, higher absenteeism, and lower productivity, while eminent employee engagement helps the company concentrate on recruiting new labour market talent (Robert, 2006). This study will contribute to the understanding of employee engagement phenomenon as employers perceive the need to recruit top talent and also motivate employees to apply their full capacities to their work (Bakker *et al.*, 2010).

### **Statement of the problem**

Studies concur that there is a positive relationship between relational reward and employee behavioral outcomes (Matolo, Iravo & Waititu 2019; Msisiri, & Juma 2017). Whereas, a negative relationship lead to counterproductive behaviours such as high turnover, lack of commitment, demotivation and disengagement (Allam, 2017) which may cause the Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG3) on good health and well-being not to be achieved.

There is a noticeable depletion of doctors and nurses leaving the public health sector for other organizations due to disengagement. Research show that up to 75% doctors, 5% enrolled nurses and 17% registered nurses leave respectively (HRH, 2012; Kiambati et al., 2013; and Mwenda, 2012). This is a firmed by WHO (2006) revealing that Kenya is among the 57 countries in the world and 36 within sub-Saharan Africa that face a severe health workforce catastrophe with

insufficient crucial health employees like doctors and nurses. Further, WHO (2010); MOH (2016) acknowledges that the country's doctors and nurses per population ratio is at 13.8: 10,000 against an estimated ratio of 44.5: 10,000 required to achieve the SDGs by 2030 indicating a significant gap.

Kenya Health Workforce Report (2015) stipulates that the main elements propelling the disengagement leading to turnover intentions include dissatisfying working conditions and reward systems, inadequate resource and disregarded health system, and poor human resources planning and management practices and structures. Okanga and Kamara (2017), in agreement with the scenario, contemplated that poor working conditions, limited opportunities for career development and training, poor leadership and governance, lack of job security, and heavy workload are among the causes of low motivation and disengagement. According to Kirui, Luciani, Ochieng, and Kamau (2013), this has led to persistent crises in the Kenyan health sector occasioned by threats for and holding demonstrations and strike actions.

### **Objective of the Study**

The study's objective was to assess the influence of career development on employee engagement in the public health sector in Kenya.

### **Research Hypothesis**

This study tested the following hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** Career development has no significant relationship with employee engagement in the public health sector in Kenya.

### **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

The study's theoretical framework drew from Super's Career Development Theory. The theory shows the various paths towards improving professional growth and the career trajectory followed by individuals for overall job satisfaction and goal achievement (Jena & Nayak, 2020). Super's career development theory believes that self-concept changes over time and develops due to experience. Self-concept is a complex dealing among mental and physical growth, environmental features, and personal experience. Super (1994) argued that when planning your career, it's important to note that occupational preferences and competencies and an individual's life situations all change with time and experience.

Super (1994) established a framework for life stages consisting of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. It contended that movement in the stages could be a flexible process where people recycle the career stages regardless of age. He argued that

achievement of vocational developmental tasks during each state represents career maturity. In agreement with Super's theory, Jena *et al.*, (2020) argue that the theory gives attention to attitudes related to the work, such as job involvement and satisfaction. Further, the theory helps to acquire knowledge about how an individual develops his career by remaining in an organization and the methods that an individual adopts to adjust and achieves knowledge and skills according to various circumstances, needs, and social situations.

Career development theory assists in explaining the reasons for flourishing and selecting specific chores, gender roles and social norms by understanding environmental and cultural factors; as a result, the theory can assist an individual to better advise others on their career and as well as guide their career (Duggan, 2018). Career development theory is important in describing how an organization can recognize workers with the required talents to grow the talents that are useful in an organization (Kibui, 2015).

This theory is linked to the career development and its implication to this study is that it supports the concept that, as the self-concept becomes more realistic and stable, so does vocational choice and behavior of an employee. As a result, the ministry should allow employees to express their self-concepts since work satisfaction is related to the degree to which they have implemented their self-concepts. Similarly, the public health sector should exposes employees to a wider range of career development programs and learning opportunities, considering that occupational options narrow over time, which acts as a stimulus for an employee through personal goals, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations (Lent, 2013). The ministry can also identify the career development stage and set goals for mastery of the tasks unique to each stage.

The Critique of Super's theory of career development is connected to its restricted range of use, especially when it comes to comparison when the career of nursing that is having an enormous amount of personal involvement for exercising the self-concept compared with that of a clerk working in a dry clean store. Similarly, the theory interprets interest as a part of self-concept, which can be assessed but is difficult to analyze. This is because an individual may be poor at judging his own talents and may opt for a career that may be challenging for him or too low in scope to practice his talents. (Jena *et al.*, 2020).

## **Career Development**

Career development is the concern of all employees in the organization. Having been developed and having a career in the organization are a source of motivation, retention, and even job security in life (Armstrong, 2011). Evans, Pucik & Barsoux (2002) argue that, as a result of political and economic conditions, globalization, and technological changes, companies face intensified competition and are therefore encouraged to improve their workers as one of the ways to train them to respond to the growing demands for better skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

Career Development is an organized and planned effort of structured activities or processes that result in a concerted career effort between an organization and its employees (Gilley, Eggland & Gilley, 2002). It entails a linear upward movement from relatively low status, responsibility, and remuneration to a higher position (White, 2011). Today, employers understand that the absence of personal career and organizational career management practices may cause them not to obtain good performance from their employees (Agba, *et al.*, 2010). As a result, career development is gaining more recognition from various organizations to ameliorate job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Organizations need talented and efficient employees to gain and maintain a competitive advantage, and they need career development to increase and cultivate their competencies (Prince, 2005).

Career strategies are based on two philosophies, according to Armstrong (2011), which advance careers to fulfill organizational and individual criteria and the need to optimize the efficiency and happiness capacity of people in the organization under transition conditions. While the employees develop themselves, they continue to offer the organization success. The opportunities furnished by the organization for employee development will cause greater job satisfaction, which is a stronger commitment to the organization's service. Gachunga (2016) consider a career to revolve around three basic subject matters: advancement in a career position, source of stability within a single occupational field, and development of a person's work experience. They posit that a career is a pattern of work-related experience that spans the course of a person's life, and it should be dedicated to the method of career management and clear policies that guarantee fairness with the individual employee having the freedom of choice in promotions and job movement and to the resources on the market.

Career development has been a subject of many studies over the years. Raja *et al.* (2011) conducted a survey, and the study reported a strong link between career development and organizational service delivery. Similarly, Abeeha and Bariha (2012) conveyed in their studies that there was a strong association between an employee's career development and organizational competitive advantage. Sangaran and Jeetesh (2015) researched the components of job satisfaction that affected the employees' decision to quit the hotel industry. The results established wage/salary and career progression as job satisfaction factors that affected turnover. Similarly, in the same industry, Mapelu and Jumah (2013), using 350 employee target participants, conducted a study to probe the influence of training and development on employee turnover in chosen middle-sized hotels in Kisumu, Kenya. The study reckoned that employee career development significantly affected employee turnover.

Koech (2011) shared these views, advocating that investing in employee training and career growth is essential for employee engagement and minimizes the turnover rate. Career growth involves a workforce beginning with employee orientation, job training, experience, short

courses, professional courses, postgraduate, and an employee improving their career through an ongoing acquisition of managerial or professional skills and experience that can bring rewards and promotion (Hall, 2010). Therefore, organizations must provide training for new employees and help develop the present employees through an efficient career system (Mwangi & Gachunga, 2016). Research done by Robbins and Judge (2015) advocates that there is a high relationship between employee performance and career development in organizations. Bari, Arif, and Shoaib (2013) found that independence, career development plan, valuation of workers, learning, open and comfortable work environment, and good supervisory relationships positively affected employee attitude and workplace efficiency.

A study by Agbenyegah (2019) in a financial institution in Ghana looked at opportunities for career development, job promotion, and training and their effect on motivating employee performance revealed that non-monetary rewards affect employee performance. Further, a Tea factory company study on determinants of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards on employee performance found that various motivational factors like promotion, job security, career progression, training and development influenced employees' performance (Kilimo, Namusonge, Makokha and Nyagechi, 2016). Perek and Rao (2012) argue that employees' career development should not be considered a cost. In agreement with the view, Osibanjo and Adeniji, (2012) posits that organizations return on investment can be achieved through career development by reducing the costs incurred in recruitment and training of new employees. Still, as an investment and re-skilling, employees' willingness and motivation are key to a high-performance level. Kakui and

Greller & Drachsler (2012) coined that career growth, also known as career progression, which means achieving a top position in a company or acquiring experience in several fields to establish a specific and multi-faceted function for oneself, is a phenomenon that is formalized, coordinated, and designed to aim to achieve the balance between organizational workforce requirements and individual career needs. Career development generates organizational promotion opportunities and offers preparation opportunities to increase workers' employability in the internal and external labor market (Butler & Waldrop, 2001). Research by Kwenin (2013) on the relationship between work climate, retention of employees, and opportunities for career development in Vodafone Ghana Limited showed that career development opportunities had a clear correlation with retention of employees ( $r = 0.387$ ) with a significant level of 0.000, which means that retention was significantly affected by the two variables. Further, the study recommended that the organization's management provide development opportunities to increase employees' career growth, satisfy them, and reduce turnover. Career advancement entails the existence of alternative career paths based on individual employees and organizational needs.

Pinnington (2011), in his study on competence development and career advancement of lawyers, reckoned that theoretically, any work experience and professionals' expertise are

potential human and relational capital that can be relevant for the benefit of clients. A study by Hassan *et al.* (2016) advocated that companies should induce reward giving culture and provide workers with an atmosphere where they can accept career growth and professional skills to improve employee encouragement and loyalty. Semwal and Dhyani (2017) noted that the organization's career development prospects notably contribute to all the components of employee engagement more than the support provided by training initiatives alone.

Further, career development takes place through mentoring and coaching. Line managers who are more experienced in coaching also help their employees' growth (Leisink & Knies, 2011). Coaching is a developmental activity in which an employee works with their line manager one-on-one to enhance current job performance and increase their potential for future positions and challenges. Grant (2010) defines coaching as a helping association formed between a line manager and an employee, in which the line manager uses a diversity of cognitive and behavioral approaches to help the employee achieve a mutually defined set of aims, with the objective of not only easing their work performance but also putting the organization at a competitive edge.

Research on coaching and career mentoring programs has shown that the coaches/mentees will show positive career attitudes, greater job satisfaction, and greater commitment to the organization if implemented effectively. Raghuram (2014) has reckoned that coaching and mentoring are the bedrock of developing the necessary skills to maintain organizational effectiveness and performance. Via learning opportunities, career growth may also take place. By bracing, structuring, and tracking their learning while working, learning can be intentional, organized, and targeted at training employees. Business learning has been changed because, along with the number of companies building formal training courses, the avenues and styles of formal training have expanded. Training is described as a structured operation to convey information or instructions to improve employees' performance or achieve the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities (Aswathappa, 2018).

Kegan and Lahey (2016) strongly believe that since this is consistent with people's greatest motive to succeed, organizations that actively cultivate every individual will prosper. This implies that companies should cuddle with a community in which learning assistance is connected to the working life system, the organization's everyday activities, daily routines, and conversations. Learning and development will lead to an increase in people's effort, motivation, and job satisfaction. It is also becoming widely accepted that providing them with opportunities to learn and build new competencies is the most effective way to involve employees. Research has shown that highly engaged and motivated employees are indispensable in increasing new technologies and innovative practices. Besides, Kegan *et al.* (2016) advocate that committed workers will likely remain with the Company where they are challenged and given the abilities to improve and develop in their chosen career direction. Eldor and Vigoda-gadot (2016) found



that organizations with growing degrees of employee involvement provide workers with career development opportunities to learn new skills and protect their potential.

Therefore, training and career development are salient predecessors, which is to be regarded in engaging employees since it helps them focus on the assigned work measurement. Karanja, Nzulwa, Kamaara, and Karanja (2017) researched the effect of employee performance in the public service of Kenya on training and development practices. The adoption of a cross-sectional descriptive survey model showed a coefficient of association of 0.486 and 0.553, respectively, indicating a positive relationship. Similarly, Mwangi, Ngui, and Kirori (2017) investigated the effect of training on employees' performance in Kenya's education sector: the case of the Teachers' Service Commission using a descriptive study design. The results showed that there was a clear positive correlation between the abilities of employees (0.7), expertise (0.6), competence (0.7), and the output of employees.

Muchibi, Mutua, Musiega, and Mumassabba (2015) researched the effect of training and development practices on organizational commitment; in the case of Mumias Sugar Company Limited and the study found that there was a strong positive association between the training and development practices on employee's affective commitment in the Company ( $r=0.25$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.009$ ). Subramaniam *et al.* (2010) advocate that when employees' skills, knowledge, and abilities can be improved and made up to date through training and development could influence organizational performance.

Furthermore, Dimba's (2010) research estimated that there were influences and correlations between training and growth and organizational performance. Providing systematic development exercises and planned learning promotion instruction would enable workers to continuously update their skills and improve their careers. Many individuals now regard access to training as a key component in the overall incentive package. The availability of learning opportunities, the selection of individuals for high-level training courses and programs, and the Company's emphasis on acquiring new skills and improving existing ones can all serve as powerful motivators (Al-Qudah, Osman, Halim, and Al-Shatanawi, 2014). According to Tzafrir (2006), training and development are the most customary Human Resource practice. Thang and Buyens (2008) reckon that training and development lead to superior employee skills, knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and behavior that eventually improve organizational performance. Training and growth refer to an organizational strategy that includes bringing value to the Company and an employer's dedication to its workers instead of lowering costs or merely arming employees with the skills they need to perform their jobs.

In general, employers must provide an opportunity for their employees to learn (Van Gennip, Gijbels, Segers, & Tillema, 2010). Proactive development schemes will motivate an employee, ensure a more loyal and committed employee, and improve the employee's capabilities. In a

research laboratory focusing on employee engagement among hospital managers, nurses, service employees, and clerks, as well as scientists and engineers, a study by Marchington and Wilkinson (2008) reckoned that employees were more engaged to their employment and the achievement of the organization's goals when they believed that the Company cared about their needs for training and growth. Hence, appropriate training positively endows reduced employee turnover intentions as it makes employees feel appreciated for their skills and creates opportunities for developing their qualities (Kyndt, Dochy, Michielsen, & Moeyaert, 2010). Employee training and career growth have been a perfect response to business challenges and the leadership of human resources in modern management, according to (Kamau & Muathe, 2016).

## **Employee engagement**

In the United Kingdom, the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) (2014) notes that employee engagement involves three dimensions: intellectual engagement, which they described as hard thinking about the job and how to do it better, and affective engagement, which feels optimistic about doing a good job, and social engagement that refers to actively taking possibilities. Chandani, Mehta, Mall, and Khokhar (2016) proffered the theory of engagement and described that the intellectual facet of engagement is equivalent to job dedication, while affective engagement is tantamount to self-fulfillment. Social engagement is the relational facet that improves performance.

Anthony-McMann, Ellinger, Astakhova, and Halbesleben (2016) found a strong association between workplace stress and intellectual and social engagement. Soane, Truss, Alfes, Shantz, Rees, and Gatenby (2012) describe intellectual engagement as an absorbing, creatively energized focus resulting in a deep personal commitment to exploration, investigation, problem-solving, and inquiry over a sustained period. The degree to which one is intellectually engrossed in work and thinks about ways to improve work has been referred to as the cognitive dimension of engagement, which has been an essential component of engagement in prior studies (Macey & Schneider, 2008; May *et al.*, 2004; Rich *et al.*, 2010; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002), and concerns the association between the engaged state and high levels of cognitive activity directed towards performing the work role. Cognitive commitment (Kahn, 1990) and devotion (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002) are used.

On the other hand, affective engagement refers to the degree to which one experiences a state of positive affect relating to one's work role (Soane *et al.*, 2012). During this stage, Kavya & Padmavathy (2017) advocate that extremely engaged employees become powerful leaders who positively model organizational culture and the employees. The theoretical and empirical position of impact in interaction is evident, and this facet is included in many conceptualizations (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; May *et al.*, 2004; Rich *et al.*, 2010; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004;

Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002; Truss *et al.*, 2006). The underlying theory explains this association in terms of affect rather than emotion.

Social engagement is the degree to which one is socially connected with the working environment and shares common values with colleagues. Soane *et al.* (2012) argued that social engagement is the experience of connectedness with others and is an integral feature of self-in-role expression. Other scholars in the field have acknowledged the relevance of the social context to engagement, which can also be linked to systems perspectives on Human Resource Development (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Salanova *et al.*, 2005; Rich *et al.*, 2010).

King-Hill (2015) posits that Maslow's hierarchy of needs stages, that is, love and belongingness, is similarly critical to employee engagement. This love and belongingness element is juxtaposed to the social belonging that integrates organizational identity and highlights that employees' sense of belonging in the workplace is similar to enhanced job engagement and commitment (Dai & Qin, 2016). Engaged employees are loyal workers who feel a sense of belongingness, fulfillment, and satisfaction (Bhavani, 2015).

### Conceptual framework

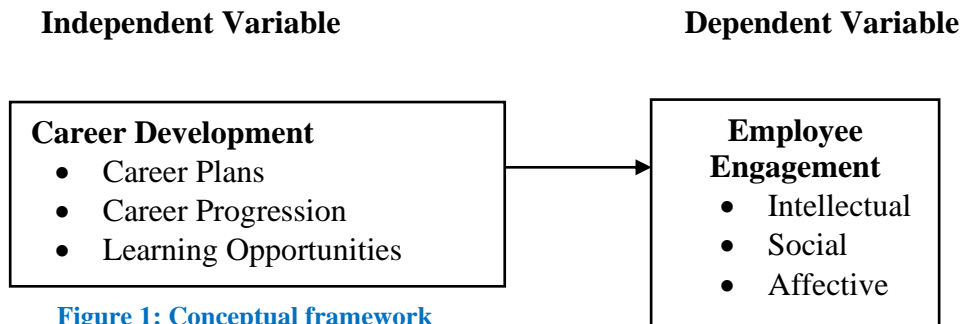


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design which aim to generate detailed information about phenomena in natural settings without manipulation (Mutua, 2020). This involved distribution of self-administered open and closed-ended questionnaires to 342 study participants selected from a target population of 3,092 doctors and both registered and enrolled nurses distributed in 4 devolved counties in western (MOH, HIS, 2019). This study was based on a positivism philosophy and deductive approach; hence it adopted quantitative research (Saunders *et al.*, 2014).

In addition, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used for each stratum which comprised of doctors and nurses. Career development was measured in terms of career plans,

career progression and learning opportunities with items adopted from the Nienaber (2010) questionnaire on the total reward preference model due to its multidimensionality. Whereas, employee engagement was measured in terms of intellectual, social and affective engagement with 9 questionnaire items adopted from ISA engagement scale (Soane *et al.*, 2012). Intellectual is characterized by an absorbing, creatively energized focus resulting in a deep personal commitment to exploration, investigation, problem-solving, and inquiry over a sustained period. Similarly, social explains how one is socially connected with the working environment and shares common values with colleagues and affective where one experiences a state of positive affect relating to one's work role. All the items were measured on a five point likert scale ranging from; 1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient of internal consistency was 0.709. Both mixed approaches were used during data collection and data analysis which enabled triangulation to take place and enhanced the significance of the interpretation of results and collaboration of findings (Creswell, 2013). Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. The descriptive statistics provided frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to analyze quantitative data before inferential statistics which were based on correlation, simple, and multiple linear regressions to test whether career development had a significant influence on employee engagement. (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2014).

A regression model used to investigate this relationship is as shown.

$$Y = \alpha + X_1\beta_1 + \epsilon \dots\dots\dots \text{model for hypothesis (I)}$$

Where Y is Employee engagement

X1 is Career development

$\beta_1$  is the regression coefficients

$\epsilon$  = Error Term.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Descriptive statistics**

This study's objective was to determine career development's influence on employee engagement in the public health sector in Kenya. The study looked at career development from the perspectives of career plans, career progression, and learning opportunities performed by the public health sector in Kenya. Career development was operationalized by six (6) questionnaire items adapted from Nienaber's (2010) Total Reward Preference Model. With a five-point Likert scale measurement ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree, participants were probed to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement about career development as a form of relational reward on given declarative statements.

The findings in table 1 stipulated that a majority 211(66.2%) of respondents believe that the sector’s financial support for learning programs motivates them to perform better. This was against 73(21.9%) who cumulatively disagreed with the statement, with 40(12.0%) being neutral. Similarly, the study sought to determine whether all employees are given growth opportunities in training and development. 92(28.0%) of those surveyed did not respond in favour of the statement, while 214(64.1%) responded in acceptance of the information. However, 8.4 percent were neutral on the account. In addition, the study did seek to find out whether the sector has a policy on employee career development. The findings indicated that 68(18.9%) of respondents were unaware of whether the industry has a policy on employee career development, while 230(68.9%) of respondents answered in affirmative to the statement. This was against 41(12.3%) respondents who strongly agreed or disagreed with the information. Equally, the majority of respondents, 238(71.3%), cumulatively agreed that there are coaching and mentorship programs for management development (see table 1). This was against 51(26.1%) who cumulatively disagreed with the statement. However, 45(13.5%) of respondents were neutral on the idea. Table 1 also divulged that most participants, 271(81.2%), cumulatively agreed that there is control over their work methods at their place of work. This was against 47(14.1%) participants who were neutral on the statement. Nonetheless, 16(4.8%) disagreed with the information. The study also sought to determine if all employees are given equal opportunities for promotion. A good percentage of the study participants, 115(34.4%), cumulatively disagreed with the statement, with only 54(16.2%) agreeing. However, most of the respondents, 165(49.4%), were neutral on the same. The composite mean for career development was 3.52. These results are summarized as shown in table 1 below:

**Table 1: Career Development**

<b>Career Development</b>	<b>SD</b> f (%)	<b>D</b> f (%)	<b>N</b> f (%)	<b>A</b> f (%)	<b>SA</b> f (%)	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
Financial Support	58(17.4)	15(4.5)	40(12.0)	32(9.6)	189(56.6)	3.84	1.552
Growth Opportunities	18(5.8)	74(22.2)	28(8.4)	166(49.7)	48(14.4)	3.46	1.143
Policy on Care development	6(1.8)	35(10.5)	63(18.9)	198(59.3)	32(9.6)	3.64	.861
Coaching and Mentorship programs	9(2.7)	42(12.4)	45(13.5)	222(66.5)	16(4.8)	3.58	.869
Control over work methods	7(2.1)	9(2.7)	47(14.1)	189(56.6)	82(24.6)	3.99	.827
Equal opportunity for promotion	20(6.0)	95(28.4)	165(49.4)	23(6.9)	31(9.3)	2.85	.972
<b>Composite Mean</b>						<b>3.52</b>	

*N=334; Strongly Disagree (SD=1), Disagree (D=2), Neutral (N=3), Agree (A=4), Strongly Agreed (SA=5)*

From the findings (in table 1), the study concludes that where a majority of the public health sector has diverse supported learning programs and provides equal learning and career progression opportunities through progressive policies act as a genesis of employee engagement. Wetland (2012) has shared these findings, advocating that investing in employee training and career growth is essential for employee engagement and minimizes the turnover rate. These responses are also in collaboration with those of Semwal and Dhyani (2017), who posited that the organization's career development prospects notably pungle up to all the components of employee engagement more than the support provided by training initiatives alone.

These findings were triangulated with data collected from open-ended questions from respondents. The respondents were asked to suggest what needs to be done by the sector to improve employee engagement through training and development. Thematic content indicated management support through the provision of career training, sponsorship, and awareness creation on career development. One respondent noted:

*"All employees should be given equal opportunities for learning and upgrading to enhance service delivery as a health worker" – RESP 280*

Another respondent stated:

*""Creating targeted competency development modules that nurture, foster and grow core values" – RESP 201*

Yet other 2 respondents observed:

*"Scholarships should be availed for everyone" – RESP 227*  
*"Creating awareness for the employees on career development" - RESP305*

These comments show where the public health sector embraced career development by creating awareness of the same and providing training opportunities through targeted programs to improve health workers' engagement. Similarly, management support through scholarships and government sponsorship increased the engagement level of health workers. This finding is reflected by Kim and Park, (2020), who indicated a link between top management support for talent and job satisfaction and the organizational commitment of career changers. Moreover, top management support is one of the channels through which an organization can achieve the desired goal and objectives (Kemei, Oboko & Kidombo, 2018).

## **Employee Engagement**

The study went further to determine how far employees within the public health sector are engaged to the industry and how such engagement could be influenced by career development. Employee engagement was operationalized using the intellectual, affective and social (Soane *et*

al. 2012). All measures of the predicted variable used a 5-point likert scale from 1= strongly disagree (SD) to 5= strongly agree (SA).

### **Intellectual Engagement**

Table 2 presents the findings which show that majority of respondents 150(44.9%) strongly agreed and 125(37.4%) agreed that they focus hard on their work against 18(5.4%) respondents cumulatively who did not agree on the same. Additionally, 41(12.3%) of the study participants were neutral on the statement. Consistently, majority of respondents 159(47.6%) strongly agreed and 133(39.8%) approved totalling to 87.4 per cent that they concentrate on their work. Nonetheless, an insignificant figure of 14(4.2%) of the study participants cumulatively disagreed that they don't concentrate on their work. Further, 28(8.4%) were neutral on the statement. Equally, 83.5 per cent of the respondents who were majority, 155(46.4%) strongly agreed with 124(37.1%) agreeing that they pay a lot of attention to their work. Nevertheless, 7(2.1%) disagreed with the statement and another 6(1.8%) strongly opposing. Additionally, 42(12.6%) were neutral and they neither contradicted nor agreed with the statement.

### **Social Engagement**

The results in table 2 also revealed that, majority of respondents 224(67.0%) answered in affirmative that they share the same work values as their colleagues with 132(39.5%) agreeing and 92(27.5%) strongly agreeing on the same. It was against 27(8.1 %) of respondents who strongly disagreed with 13(3.9%) opposing that they share the same work values as their colleagues. In addition, 70(21.0%) were neutral with the statement. Equally, majority of the respondents 162(48.5%) cumulatively agreed that they share the same work goals as their colleagues with 66(19.8%) cumulatively disagreeing on the same. However, 106(31.7%) were neutral on the statement. Nonetheless, 129(38.6%) of the study participants disagreed that they share the same work attitudes as their colleagues with 120(35.9%) agreeing on the same. However 85(25.4%) of the respondents were neutral on the same.

### **Affective Engagement**

Similarly, 141(42.2%) of the respondents (majority) strongly agreed that they felt positive about their work with 121(36.2%) agreeing with the statement totaling to 78.4 per cent of the study participants. However, 19(5.7%) of the respondents cumulatively didn't feel the same way. A further 53(15.9%) were neutral with the statement. Consistently, 236(70.6%) of study participants. cumulatively felt energetic in their work with 120(35.9%) strongly agreeing and 116(34.7%) agreeing. This was against 33(9.95%) of participants who disagreed with a further 15(4.5%) of those who participated who strongly felt that they are not energetic in their work. The study also sought to find out how enthusiastic the respondents were in their work. Majority

199(59%) cumulatively agreed with the statement with 52(15.6%) cumulatively disagreeing with the statement. A further, 85(25.4%) were neutral with the statement. The mean for employee engagement was 3.84. A summary of the findings is shown in table 2 below.

**Table 2: Employee Engagement**

<b>Employee Engagement</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
	<b>f (%)</b>	<b>f (%)</b>	<b>f (%)</b>	<b>f (%)</b>	<b>f (%)</b>		
<b>Intellectual Engagement</b>							
I focus hard on my work	9(2.7)	9(2.7)	41(12.3)	125(37.4)	150(44.9)	4.19	.942
I concentrate on my work	6(1.8)	8(2.4)	28(8.4)	133(39.8)	159(47.6)	4.29	.857
I pay a lot of attention to my work	6(1.8)	7(2.1)	42(12.6)	124(37.1)	155(46.4)	4.24	.883
Composite Mean						<b>4.24</b>	
<b>Social Engagement</b>							
Sharing work values with colleagues	13(3.9)	27(8.1)	70(21.0)	132(39.5)	92(27.5)	3.79	1.057
Sharing work goals with colleagues	13(3.9)	53(15.9)	106(31.7)	109(32.6)	53(15.9)	3.41	1.055
Sharing work attitudes with colleagues	28(8.4)	101(30.2)	85(25.4)	85(25.4)	35(10.5)	2.99	1.147
Composite Mean						<b>3.39</b>	
<b>Affective Engagement</b>							
I feel positive about my work	5(1.5)	14(4.2)	53(15.9)	121(36.2)	141(42.2)	4.13	.931
I feel energetic in my work	15(4.5)	33(9.9)	49(14.7)	116(34.7)	121(36.2)	3.88	1.140
I am enthusiastic in my work	13(3.9)	39(11.7)	85(25.4)	127(38.0)	70(21.0)	3.60	1.062
Composite mean						<b>3.87</b>	

*N=334; Strongly Disagree (SD=1), Disagree (D=2), Neutral (N=3), Agree (A=4), Strongly Agreed (SA=5)*



Table 2, indicated consistency in general agreement on all responses by the study participants to the likert statements about employee engagement. This gave a clear indication that majority of the public health sector employees are intellectually absorbed in their work and they think hard about the work they do and how they can do it better. Further that the respondents were optimistic about doing a good job and were equally affectively engaged. Kavya & Padmavathy (2017) provided backing that such employees become powerful leaders who positively model organizational culture. This view is in collaboration with Ullah, Khattak, and Rahman (2018) who reckoned that engaged employees show high morale, stress on teamwork, and keep a positive work attitude. Also, Bhavani, (2015) posited that engaged employees are a loyal worker who feel a sense of belongingness, fulfilled and satisfaction.

The study further, investigated ways though which career development could be used more effectively to improve employee engagement in the public health sector through open-ended questions. Majority of the respondents noted that if the public health sector would come up with capacity building activities through training and development, then this would improve employee engagement. Further that for employees to be engaged, then the public health sector should involve them in the development, implementation and revision of career development programs and provide good working environment by setting reasonable and transparent performance standards for career development. In addition, provision of equal opportunities for career development and coming up with policies that support the same would increase employee engagement. Nonetheless, management support in terms of provision of scholarship and sponsorships would propel employee engagement (Kim and Park, 2020).

### **Correlation Analysis**

Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength, direction, and presence, of a linear relationship between career development and employee engagement. The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) values range from -1, indicating a perfectly linear negative correlation (independent variable is positively and negatively related to the dependent variable) to +1, showing a perfectly linear positive correlation - predictor variable is perfectly and positively correlated with predicted variable. Nevertheless, a correlation coefficient close to (0) indicates little correlation - the independent variable cannot describe the variation in the dependent variable (Cooper & Schilder, 2015). The study conducted correlation analysis using the Pearson correlation coefficient technique. The study sought to determine the influence of career development on employee engagement in the public health sector in Kenya. The results are shown in table 3 and explained thereafter.

**Table 3: Correlation Matrix**

	1	2
1 Career Development	1	
2 Employee Engagement	.670**	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### **Career Development and Employee Engagement**

The correlation matrix from table 3 revealed that the predictor variable career development was found to have a positive moderate significant ( $r=0.670^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) influence on the computed variable of employee engagement measured by intellectual, social, and affective engagements. Thus, the results suggested that an increase in career development will automatically increase employee engagement. As a result, this study can conclude that career development has a positive moderate significant influence on employee engagement.

These findings were supported by Koech (2011) and Wetland (2012), who advocated that investing in employee training and career development is essential for employee engagement and minimizes the turnover rate. Semwal and Dhyani (2017) consistently noted that the organization's career development prospects notably contribute to all the components of employee engagement more than the support provided by training initiatives alone. Similarly, Mwangi & Gachunga, (2016) shared these views advocating that organizations must provide training for new employees and help develop the present employees through an efficient career system.

Accordingly, Pereek and Rao (2012) argue that employees' career development should not be considered a cost. In agreement with the view, Abecha and Bariha (2012) reckoned a strong association between an employee's career development and organizational competitive advantage. Therefore, organizations need talented and efficient employees to gain and maintain this competitive advantage, and these employees need career development to increase and cultivate their competencies (Prince, 2014). Further, having been developed and having a career in the organization are a source of motivation, retention, and even job security in life (Armstrong, 2011). As a result, career development is used to overcome the organization's problems, including employee turnover, disengagement, and job insecurity, among other issues.

Research by Kwenin (2013) on the relationship between work climate, retention of employees, and opportunities for career development in Vodafone Ghana Limited showed that career development opportunities had a clear correlation with retention of employees ( $r = 0.387$ ) with a

significant level of 0.000, which means that retention was significantly affected by the two variables. Further, the study recommended that the organization's management provide development opportunities to increase employees' career growth, satisfy them, and reduce turnover. Therefore, the findings of the study suggested that, career development through career plans, career progression, and learning and development are significantly related to the engagement of employees in the public health sector in Kenya.

### **Regression Analysis**

The study additionally performed a regression analysis by fixing the linear regression model for the data. Regression analysis was administered for career development on employee engagement. This was done on purpose to examine the level of influence that career development had on employee engagement. It confirmed the relationship between the predictor variable and the predicted variable. The attained results were discussed as below.

### **Career Development on Employee Engagement**

The study carried out a simple linear regression analysis to examine the quantity of variance of career development as a predictor variable on employee engagement and its measures (intellectual, social and affective). Regarding results from table 3 that established career development as having a significant and positive moderate effect on employee engagement ( $r=0.670^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), for the specific nature of effect to be established, the predictor variable of career development was regressed with employee engagement and the results presented in tables 4 and expound thereof:

**Table 4: Career Development on Employee Engagement**

<b>Model Summary</b>									
						Change Statistics			
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.670 <sup>a</sup>	.449	.447	.38475	.449	270.574	1	332	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Career Development

Table 4 indicated the variation in employee engagement as explained by the independent variable career development. The simple regression analysis capitulates a coefficient R-value of 0.670 and  $R^2 = 0.449$ .

This implies that 44.9 per cent of the total variation in the dependent variable (employee engagement) can be explained by career development. The remaining could be elucidated by other variables, not in this model. Similarly, the outcome in table 4 indicated the F test value of 270.574,  $p < 0.001$ , which was large enough to underpin the model's goodness of fit in elaborating the variation in employee engagement. This substantiates the effectiveness of career development as a predictor variable on employee engagement in the public health sector.

Further, table 3 revealed that career development positively and significantly influences employee engagement ( $r=0.670^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This implies that employees who are satisfied with the diverse supported learning programs and equal career progression opportunities offered by the public health sector will also display high levels of employee engagement. These findings are in collaboration with the research by Wetland (2012), who reckoned that investing in employee training and career growth minimizes the rate of employees leaving the organization and is considered crucial for employee engagement. Furthermore, Kim and Park, (2020) study revealed an association between management support and job satisfaction and commitment.

**Table 5: Regression Coefficients of Career Development Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.799	.126		14.308	.000
	Career Development	.573	.035	.670	16.449	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

In addition, the unstandardized coefficients  $\beta$  value of the computed career development scores was 0.670 with a t-test value of 16.449 at a significance level of  $p < 0.01$ . The results in table 5 further revealed that the t-value is greater than +1.96; therefore, the regression model obtained is significant and viable. Further, with a p-value ( $p < 0.01$ ), it insinuates that for every 1 per cent rise in career development, there was a predicted zero percentage (0%) rise in employee engagement. The study rejected the null hypothesis; having realized the objective.

### **Hypothesis Testing Results**

This study sought to determine the influence of career development on employee engagement in the public health sector in Kenya. To achieve the purpose of the study, a corresponding null hypothesis was formulated and tested as shown below;

***H<sub>01</sub>:*** *Career development has no significant relationship with employee engagement in the public health sector in Kenya.*

The results obtained in the correlation matrix (table 3) and the subsequent tables 4 and 5 on regression analysis revealed that career development has a positive moderate significant relationship on employee engagement. Results showed a positive  $\beta$  value of 0.670, indicating a positive relationship, and as a result, as career development increases, employee engagement improves. The regression's coefficients of career development also indicate a p-value of 0.000 for career development which is less than the level of significance of 0.05 and which shows a linear relationship between employee engagement and career development. Since the p-value ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis was rejected because there was a significant relationship between career development and employee engagement. The study accepts that there is a 0.670 unit increase in employee engagement for each increase in career development. This influence was also stated by a t- a value of 3.217, which is greater than +1.96, implying that the standard error associated with the parameter, is less than the influence of the parameter. Prior studies have also indicated that career development is significantly related to employee engagement (Kim & Park, 2020; Wetland, 2012).

**Table 6: Hypothesis Testing Results**

	<b>Hypothesis</b>		<b>Beta (<math>\beta</math>)value</b>	<b>P value</b>	<b>Decision</b>
H <sub>01</sub> :	Career development has no relationship with employee engagement.	$H_{01} = \mu$	.670	.000	Rejected

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study sought to determine whether career development had an influence on employee engagement in the public health sector in Kenya. The findings from the descriptive analysis revealed that out of the six statements, five statements were answered in affirmative, with only one account on the provision of equal opportunity for promotion, where the majority were neutral, with a good number disagreeing with it. The computed Chronbach Alpha of the career development items was reliable. The correlation and inferential analysis findings revealed that career development had a positive moderate significant influence on employee engagement in the public health sector in Kenya.

Correspondingly, the findings indicated that employees who are provided with diverse learning programs and receive management support in career progression through scholarships and government sponsorship tend to have increased employee engagement in the sector. Further, the study found that employee engagement increased when the public health sector provided equal

learning and career progression opportunities through targeted programs for different groups. Providing career development awareness through progressive policies was also a critical factor in employee engagement. Thus, the study rejected the null hypothesis set with the establishment that career development had a positive moderate significant influence on employee engagement in the public health sector in Kenya.

Further, conclusions drawn suggests that when career development is low or not provided to nurses and doctors within the public health sector, their engagement will decrease. Similarly, failure to implement diverse and supported career development programs and learning opportunities could cost the sector a lot in terms of decreased engagement affecting service delivery and performance. Consequently, it is the recommendation of this study that the administrators and policymakers in the public health sector adopt career management policies that enhance supported career development and learning programs that would take equal opportunities for learning and upgrading. In addition, sensitization on the availability of this career management policy should be programmed. Equally, management support through provision of scholarships and the provision of targeted competency development modules and evaluation for all the groups (nurses and doctors) could nurture, foster, and grow individual performance and engagement.

However, the replication of this study in the private health sector, including Non-Governmental Organizations and Faith-Based Organizations, would demonstrate the significance of career development and how it relate to employee engagement in general. A researcher can further review the study on other dimensions of relational rewards on other employee behavioural outcomes like commitment, motivation, retention, and satisfaction, among others.

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