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Influence of Human Resource Capacity on Performance of County Government Departments in Turkana County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the effect of human resource capacity on the performance of county government departments in Turkana County, Kenya. Despite substantial financial allocations under devolution, Turkana County continues to experience persistent challenges in project completion, service delivery, and socio-economic development, raising concerns about the effectiveness of human resource capacity within its departments. A quantitative approach was used in the study, specifically adopting descriptive and correlational research designs. The target population comprised 120 senior county government officials drawn from four cadres: directors, accountants, human resource officers, and procurement officers working across 11 county departments in Turkana Central Sub-County. Yamane's sampling formula was applied to determine a sample size of 93 respondents. Stratified sampling was used to categorise respondents into four cadres, while purposive sampling was applied to select relevant officials across 11 departments. Primary data were gathered through structured questionnaires, whereas secondary data were sourced from Programme-Based Budgets and departmental reports. Findings revealed that although employees possessed adequate technical and problem-solving skills, significant gaps existed in training opportunities, access to capacity-building information, reward systems, and job security. Regression results indicated that human resource capacity had a weak and statistically insignificant influence on performance ($R^2 = 0.034$), implying that it explains only a small proportion of performance variation in county departments. The study concludes that weaknesses in human resource capacity management have minimal influence on the performance of county government departments in Turkana County. It recommends strengthening structured training programmes, improving employee motivation and reward systems, enhancing job security, and institutionalising effective human resource development frameworks.

Key words: County government performance, human resource capacity, resource management, service delivery, Turkana County.



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INTRODUCTION

Human resource capacity is a fundamental component of organisational resource management and a key determinant of performance in public sector institutions. Grounded in the Resource-Based Theory (Barney, 1991) and the Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece et al., 1997), human resources are conceptualised not merely as operational inputs but as strategic assets whose competencies, skills, and coordination capabilities significantly influence how effectively organisations deploy other resources. These theoretical perspectives emphasise that superior organisational performance is achieved when institutions develop, integrate, and effectively utilise unique workforce capabilities that are difficult to imitate.

Despite this theoretical consensus, empirical evidence on the relationship between human resource capacity and organisational performance remains fragmented, particularly within devolved governance systems. Most existing studies have focused on private sector organisations or national-level public institutions, with limited attention given to county governments in developing country contexts. Furthermore, where public sector studies exist, they tend to emphasise general human resource management practices rather than isolating human resource capacity as a distinct construct influencing departmental performance. This creates a clear empirical and contextual gap in understanding how human resource capacity translates into performance outcomes within sub-national government structures.

Ineffective resource management has been widely associated with operational inefficiencies that undermine organisational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. Such inefficiencies are often reflected in weak coordination, inadequate alignment of strategic priorities, and suboptimal utilisation of available human and material resources across departments. In contrast, effective resource management frameworks enhance risk assessment, improve workforce deployment, and strengthen operational planning processes. As noted by Makhanya (2024) resource management is central to optimising organisational capabilities and ensuring efficient execution of institutional mandates.

Variations in organisational performance under similar operating environments have been attributed to differences in resource management practices (Carmeli & Tishler, 2004). Similarly, Amit and Schoemaker (1993) argue that organisations operating within comparable contexts may still exhibit differing performance

outcomes due to variations in the resources and capabilities they control. However, the attainment of effective resource management is often constrained by structural, environmental, and human-induced challenges, including resource limitations, political interference, economic inequality, and governance inefficiencies (Bapuji, 2015).

In the public sector, particularly within devolved governments, human resource capacity plays a critical role in enhancing service delivery and improving operational efficiency. The strategic deployment of skilled personnel is essential for timely project implementation and effective delivery of public services (Wafula & Muathe, 2019). In the context of Turkana County, persistent development challenges despite substantial fiscal allocations from the national government and development partners raise concerns regarding the effectiveness of internal resource utilisation. These issues can be seen in delayed project execution, insufficient infrastructure, high levels of poverty, and constrained access to key services such as healthcare, education, and clean water (Kisilu, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human resources are widely recognised as a critical determinant of organisational performance, particularly in public sector institutions where service delivery depends heavily on employee competence, motivation, and coordination. Within the Resource-Based Theory (Barney, 1991) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece et al., 1997), human resources are conceptualised not merely as operational inputs but as strategic assets that generate competitive advantage through their knowledge, skills, and ability to integrate organisational processes.

However, while these theories consistently predict a positive relationship between human resource capacity and performance, empirical studies show that the strength of this relationship varies depending on organisational context, management systems, and institutional support structures. A dominant strand of literature focuses on human capital development, particularly skills, knowledge, and employee competencies as drivers of performance. Studies consistently show that organisations that invest in employee development tend to achieve higher productivity and innovation outcomes. For example, Andrei and Iacob (2011), emphasise that human capital is a core intangible asset whose effective utilisation determines organisational efficiency. Similarly, Felício, Couto, and Caiado (2014) extend this argument by demonstrating that managerial cognitive

ability and experience strengthen organisational performance through improved decision-making and relationship management.

However, a comparative reading of these studies reveals an important limitation: while they establish a positive link between human capital and performance, they largely assume stable organisational environments. They do not fully explain how human capital translates into performance in resource-constrained or bureaucratic public institutions, where structural inefficiencies may weaken this relationship.

In contrast, Chigozie and Onyia (2018) and Okoye and Ezeji for (2013) show that in developing country contexts, skills development and qualified staffing significantly improve productivity. Nevertheless, these studies focus mainly on manufacturing or private-sector organisations, limiting their applicability to public sector governance systems such as county governments.

A second major theme in the literature is the role of training and skills development in improving employee and organisational performance. Across studies, there is strong agreement that training enhances efficiency, reduces errors, and improves service delivery outcomes.

Empirical evidence from Kenya shows consistent results. Studies in Laikipia, Machakos, Meru, and Western Kenya counties report that competency-based training significantly improves employee performance and service delivery (Maitai, 2019; Mulu, 2023; Mung'athia, 2025; Ooko et al., 2019). These findings are reinforced by cross-county studies showing that capacity-building initiatives improve productivity when aligned with job requirements (Nyaguthii, 2022).

However, a critical comparison of these studies reveals variation in effect size and outcomes. While training consistently improves performance, its impact is stronger in counties with structured HR systems, leadership support, and adequate resources. This suggests that training alone is insufficient unless supported by broader institutional capacity. Despite this growing evidence, most studies remain sector-specific or aggregated at the national or multi-county level, making it difficult to isolate county-specific dynamics, particularly in marginalised regions such as Turkana County. A third strand of literature focuses on employee motivation and HR systems as mediating factors in performance improvement. Studies reveal that financial and non-financial incentives are crucial in determining

employees' behaviour, attendance levels, and productivity. Research in Kenya's public and health sectors indicates that motivated employees are more likely to adhere to procedures, remain in service, and sustain program implementation (Ojakaa et al., 2014; Njuguna et al., 2014). Importantly, these studies highlight that non-financial incentives such as supervision quality, training opportunities, and recognition are often more influential than salary alone in resource-constrained environments.

Similarly, HRM systems such as performance appraisal, recruitment, and structured career development have been shown to improve service delivery outcomes (Kimilu et al., 2020; Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2016). However, comparative analysis suggests that HR systems are most effective when they are consistently implemented and linked to performance feedback mechanisms. Where enforcement is weak, their impact on performance is significantly reduced.

Within county governments, evidence generally supports a positive relationship between HRM practices and organisational performance. Studies across Kenyan counties show that HR systems, such as training, recruitment, and performance management, improve service delivery and employee effectiveness.

For instance, research by Nyaguthii (2022) across all counties found that capacity building initiatives improve employee performance, while Taiko (2022) established that retention strategies such as career development enhance institutional productivity. However, these studies also reveal that HRM effectiveness is uneven across counties due to differences in leadership commitment, resource allocation, and institutional maturity.

A key limitation of this body of literature is that most studies treat counties as homogeneous units, ignoring contextual differences such as geographic hardship, staffing shortages, and infrastructural constraints that may significantly influence HRM effectiveness.

Studies conducted within Turkana County provide important but fragmented insights. For example, Etaan and Jain (2019) found that mentorship improved employee confidence and performance in the County Assembly. Similarly, Mbulwa and Kinyua (2020) recommend capacity building as essential for improving service delivery in the county.

While these studies confirm the importance of human resource development, they are limited in scope. They focus on specific institutions (such as the County Assembly) or narrow HRM components (such as mentorship), without assessing broader human resource capacity dimensions such as staffing adequacy, skill mix, education levels, and workforce distribution across county departments.

This creates a significant contextual gap. Although Turkana County continues to receive substantial public funding and development support, it still experiences persistent service delivery challenges, suggesting that internal human resource capacity may not be fully aligned with institutional performance needs (County Government of Turkana, 2018; Kisilu, 2016).

A consistent pattern is evident across the reviewed literature: human resource capacity through skills development, training, motivation, and HR systems has a generally positive effect on organisational performance. However, three key gaps remain evident.

First, most studies focus on private sector organisations or national-level public institutions, limiting applicability to devolved governance structures. Second, existing research tends to isolate individual HR practices rather than examining human resource capacity as a comprehensive construct. Third, studies conducted in Kenyan counties, including Turkana, are largely fragmented and institution-specific, failing to provide a holistic assessment of how human resource capacity influences departmental performance across the county government system.

Therefore, despite the growing body of evidence, there remains insufficient empirical understanding of how human resource capacity affects the performance of county government departments in marginalised contexts such as Turkana County. This study addresses this gap by examining the effect of human resource capacity on county government departmental performance in this context.

METHODOLOGY

Using a quantitative approach, the study adopted descriptive and correlational research designs to examine how human resource capacity relates to the performance of county government departments. The study was conducted in Turkana Central Sub-County, where all county government offices are located. The research focused on a population consisting of 120 senior

government officials comprising 60 directors, 20 Accountants, 20 human resource officers and 20 procurement officers. Yamane's (1973) sample size formula was used to arrive at a sample size of 93 senior government officials. The population was first stratified into the 4 respondent cadres, i.e, Directors, Human Resource officers, accountants, and Procurement officers. The study employed purposive sampling to target officers from 11 county departments.

$$n=N/(1+N*e^2)$$

N- population size

e- level of precision

Based on this and with a population of 120 and a 0.05 margin of error;

$$n=120/(1+120*0.05^2)$$

$$n=120/1.3= 93$$

Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires because they are suitable for respondents with tight schedules and can collect a lot of data within the shortest time possible from a large group of respondents. The questionnaire was structured in sections to collect data on resource management and performance. The study obtained secondary data through analysis of annual project status reports and Programme-Based Budgets (PBB). Instrument validity was guaranteed by clearly specifying domain indicators aligned with the study concepts. Before the actual research, a pilot study was carried out with 12 officials, representing 10 per cent of the population, to test the validity of the instruments. The study employed the test-retest method for reliability assessment. After a three-week interval, questionnaires were re-administered to the same pilot respondents. The resulting correlation value exceeded 0.7, which is considered an acceptable threshold for reliability (Kerlinger, 1973).

Data were analysed descriptively through the computation of percentages and ratios. Regression analysis was applied as part of the inferential statistical techniques to assess the influence of human resource management on performance. Data were analysed using SPSS software version 22. Before participating in the study, respondents gave informed consent. They were informed that all their responses would remain anonymous and confidential, and participation was voluntary with the right to withdraw at any time. The information gathered was used only for academic

purposes. The study also received ethical approval and authorisation from NACOSTI prior to its initiation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to investigate the role of human resource management in shaping the performance of county government departments in Turkana County. The findings of the Human Capital Management parameters are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Human Resource Management Parameters and Their Influence on Performance

Variable Parameter	Level of Agreement	Number	Percentage
Employees have the necessary technical skills required for their roles	strongly disagree	3	4%
	Disagree	7	10%
	Neutral	11	16%
	Agree	29	43%
	Strongly agree	17	25%
Employees demonstrate strong problem-solving abilities	strongly disagree	1	1%
	Disagree	12	18%
	Neutral	16	24%
	Agree	31	46%
	strongly agree	7	10%
Employees work well in team settings and collaborate effectively	strongly disagree	2	3%
	Disagree	9	13%
	Neutral	21	31%
	Agree	28	42%
	Strongly agree	7	10%
Employees make informed and effective decisions	strongly disagree	3	4%
	Disagree	9	13%
	Neutral	15	22%
	Agree	33	49%
	Strongly agree	7	10%
Employees manage their time efficiently to meet deadlines	strongly disagree	6	9%
	Disagree	15	22%
	Neutral	13	19%
	Agree	27	40%
	Strongly agree	6	9%
Employee training match their responsibilities	strongly disagree	7	10%
	Disagree	11	16%
	Neutral	11	16%
	Agree	32	48%
	Strongly agree	6	9%
Employees are offered adequate training opportunities to better their performance	strongly disagree	9	13%
	Disagree	21	31%
	Neutral	13	19%
	Agree	19	28%
	Strongly agree	5	7%
The organization offers trainings for career advancement	strongly disagree	7	10%
	Disagree	15	22%

	Neutral	14	21%
	Agree	26	39%
	Strongly agree	5	7%
Information about available training programs is easily accessible	strongly disagree	10	15%
	Disagree	20	30%
	Neutral	14	21%
	Agree	14	21%
	Strongly agree	9	13%
Employees are celebrated and incentivized for their efforts and achievements	strongly disagree	24	36%
	Disagree	19	28%
	Neutral	11	16%
	Agree	8	12%
	Strongly agree	5	7%
Employees feel secure in their jobs, which positively affects their performance	strongly disagree	18	27%
	Disagree	14	21%
	Neutral	16	24%
	Agree	11	16%
	Strongly agree	8	12%

The findings showed that 46 respondents (68%) agreed or strongly agreed that employees of Turkana County Government possessed the technical skills necessary to perform their duties. This is significant because technical competence forms the foundation of institutional performance.

Additionally, 38 respondents (56%) agreed that employees demonstrated strong problem-solving abilities, a crucial attribute for guiding decision-making and resource management.

Furthermore, 35 respondents (52%) agreed that employees collaborate effectively in team settings. The study also revealed that 33 respondents (49%) agreed or strongly agreed that employees managed their time effectively to meet deadlines. Time management plays a vital role in resource utilisation and overall performance improvement.

On the relevance of training to job duties, 38 respondents (57%) indicated agreement or strong agreement that the training provided matched their responsibilities. Proper

alignment ensures that employees perform tasks with purpose and confidence rather than by chance.

However, 30 respondents (44%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that employees were offered adequate training opportunities to improve their performance. This highlights a gap in training needs assessment within the human resource department. Similarly, 30 respondents (45%) disagreed that information about available training programs was easily accessible.

On recognition and reward systems, 43 respondents (74%) indicated that employees were not adequately acknowledged for their hard work and achievements. Lack of recognition can demotivate employees, leading them to work only for remuneration without focusing on organisational performance.

Lastly, 32 respondents (48%) felt insecure in their jobs, as they disagreed or strongly disagreed that employees had job security.

Table 2: Inferential Statistics on the Influence of Human Resource Management on Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Unstandardized (β)
1	.183 ^a	.034	-.074	.978		-.42

a. Predictors: (Constant), Human Average

b. Dependent Variable: performance

Employing human resources as the sole predictor of performance in this model gives an R-squared of 0.034 and an adjusted R-squared of -0.074. Unequivocally, human resources only explain 3.4% of performance variance. Accordingly, in this model, human resources appear to have little to no predictive value for performance. This is an indication that there could be other factors that could be affecting performance. The study also corroborates the fact that most respondents consider the human resource management systems in Turkana County to be insufficiently established, with most human resource parameters performing poorly, as suggested by the fact that the employees are not assured of their job security, rewards are not based on performance, they are not provided with training opportunities to better their performance, and their time management is poor.

Human resources significantly predict performance, as shown by a standardised coefficient value of -0.42. This suggests that an increase of one unit in human resources corresponds to a decrease of 0.42 units in performance. The observed negative relationship implies that higher Human capital may be associated with low performance outcomes in Turkana County.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: While the respondents agreed with several parameters assessed under this objective, such as possession of necessary technical skills, problem-solving abilities, being able to work as a team and time management. The rest of the analysis pointed out a

myriad of gaps in the human resource management of the Turkana County government. The gaps included but were not limited to: Lack of adequate training opportunities to improve their performance, inadequate information on available training programs, Employees are not recognised and rewarded for their hard work and achievements, and insecurity in their job places. The regression analysis portrayed an insignificant influence in relation to the contribution of Human Resource Management to performance, with an $R^2 = 3\%$. This implied that human resource management parameters only influenced 3 per cent of the performance of the Turkana County government.

Recommendations: The government needs to work on its office spaces to ensure the comfort and effectiveness of its employees. This is because 43 per cent of the respondents stated that the office space was inadequate for their work needs, and 46 per cent argued that there was no privacy in their workspace for them to perform their duties effectively. The office storage space should be improved for proper storage of both personal and job-related items; this was informed by the 43 per cent of the respondents who argued that the storage space was not enough.

Additionally, the government needs to set aside adequate funding for machinery repair and maintenance to address issues of breakdowns and time wastage during project implementation. This was informed by 57 per cent of the respondents stating that there was not adequate funding for machinery repair and maintenance.

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