**Original Research Article**

**Succession Planning Strategies and Organizational Performance in the Public Sector: A Case of Kitui County Government, Kenya**

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# **ABSTRACT**

Organizational performance has been cited as a key concern for every organization. In the dynamically changing environment, succession planning is gaining popularity as a driver of organizational performance in the public sector. However, there is a dearth of empirical research in this area. The study assessed the influence of knowledge transfer strategies on the organizational performance of Kitui County Government. The study was underpinned by the knowledge-based view theory. A correlational research design focusing on succession planning was employed in the study. The study targeted 10 departments of the Kitui County Government, where the 8,114 employees were the units of observation. A sample size of 367 respondents was obtained using the formula suggested by Krejcie and Morgan. Stratified sampling design and simple random sampling were used to identify respondents from each department. Data were collected suing both questionnaires and interview guide. Quantitative data were analyzed to yield descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study concludes that succession planning strategies have a significant effect on organizational performance in Kitui County government (r = 0.842; β = 0.478; p<0.05). The findings of this study would be beneficial to the County Government and other policymakers in their policymaking on succession planning. It would be useful to academicians and researchers by providing evidence-based insights and serving as a reference guide for future research.

*Keywords: County Government, Knowledge Transfer Strategies*, *Organizational Performance, Succession Planning, Public Sector*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In today's fast-paced, ever changing business environment, driven by shifting customer perceptions and intense competition, organizational performance has attracted increasingly greater interest among practitioners, academicians, researchers and scholars as major pointer to effectiveness and efficiency of a company (Tan et al., 2021). This growing focus is heavily driven by the growing pace of organizational failure across various numerous organizations that are not able to maintain market-relevance and hence not sustaining growth trends (Arokodare et al., 2019). In this context, organizational performance is now increasingly recognized as an important key to measuring a firm's overall success and long-term viability (Gutterman, 2023). It is through enhanced performance, as Bunteng (2022) emphasizes, that businesses achieve development, drive progress, and eventually become their own within a more competitive global market. Accordingly, organizational performance features as the most important aspect of any organization, especially in the public sector, for representing the gap between its actual outcomes or achievements and its anticipated outputs (Taylor, 2021; Madsen & Slåtten, 2020).

The most commonly used concept of public sector performance is the production process model (Taylor, 2021). In this production process model, inputs, human, physical, and financial, are offered to organizations and programs. These inputs are utilized within activities resulting in outputs, which describe the goods and services offered by public agencies to the citizens. Thus, In the public sector context, organizational performance is commonly understood as the extent to which an organization effectively fulfills its mandated roles and responsibilities in response to the needs and expectations of the community (Syafruddin et al., 2024). An effective public sector system is required for Kenya to further make advances in providing quality services to all citizens (Barasa, Nguhiu & McIntyre, 2018). In accordance with this, organisational performance has become a source of information for decision-making to accomplish tasks efficiently, effectively, and productively, and to render customers satisfied (Arokodare & Asikhia. 2020). Increasing employee productivity renders organisational performance efficient, effective, and customer satisfied (Siepel & Dejardin, 2020). Thus, the significance of continuous improvement of the performance of the public sector is due to improved individual employee performance (Jonyo, Jonyo & Manyara, 2018). Nevertheless, in the face of market uncertainties and rapidly evolving global trends, many firms worldwide are struggling to maintain consistent organizational performance (Okechukwu, Uzoamaka, Ekwochi, & Adaeze, 2021).

Globally, public sector has witnessed downward trends in performance where in the United States Federal Government, there was 12% decline in public sector productivity over the past decade, with particular concerns about service delivery efficiency (Drummond & Stanford, 2022). In Latin American country, between 2018-2022, public institutions have seen an average 18% decrease in performance in terms of service delivery and operational efficiency (Inter-American Development Bank [IADB], 2023). There are declining trends in public sector performance across multiple EU member states, with an average 7.5% reduction in efficiency scores between 2019-2023 (European Central Bank, 2023). More so, there is deteriorating performance in 9 out of 13 key public services, with waiting times increasing and satisfaction scores decreasing across multiple sectors (Institute for Government, 2022). Meanwhile productivity in European public organizations has declined at an annual rate of 1.2% since 2018, compared to private sector growth of 0.8% during the same period (Eurostat, 2023). Between 2018 and 2022, service delivery efficiency in Australia declined by 8.5%, with notable setbacks in healthcare, education, and infrastructure (Australian Productivity Commission, 2023). In Asia, organizational performance in public sector has shown concerning trends with 5.2% decline in public sector productivity across member countries between 2019-2023(Asian Productivity Organization, 2023). Efficiency and effectiveness scores dropped by an average of 6.7% over the past five years (Asian Development Bank, 2022).

In African, public service performance declined in 31 out of 54 African countries between 2018-2022, with an average continent-wide decrease of 4.8 points on their 100-point scale (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2023). Moreover, public organizations achieve only 61% of their targeted outputs on average, down from 73% in 2016 (African Development Bank, 2022). In Eastern Africa, there is declining performance across member states' public institutions, with budget execution rates falling from 76% to 64% between 2018-2022 (East African Community, 2023).

Kenya's public sector performance has similarly experienced concerning downward trends, mirroring global patterns of declining efficiency and service delivery outcomes (African Development Bank Group, 2024). In Kenya's public sector landscape, County Government are facing challenges in service delivery (Wanyama & Muluka, 2024). Furthermore, Government of Kenya (2017) anticipated that in the next 10 years, majority of the population in the workforce will be retiring; significantly compromising their organisational performance. These performance gaps suggest that Kenya's public sector continues to struggle with achieving optimal organisational performance y outcomes (Koske & Munjuri, 2023) So, County Governments and public sector institutions are increasingly under pressure to elevate their performance to meet the rising expectations of modern society (Korow, 2024).

Moreover, succession planning is a vital driver of organizational performance in Kenyan county governments because it ensures continuity in leadership, minimizes disruptions in service delivery, and builds institutional capacity to handle change effectively (Diya & Mansor, 2019). It involves assessing and evaluating the talents within an organization to determine the presence of potential successors in the long term, their adequacy and their possession of the desired competencies for future needs (Sholesi et al., 2022; Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Succession planning focuses on Knowledge transfer strategies that represent a critical component of effective succession planning within public sector organizations (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis [KIPPRA], 2022). So, for effectiveness of continuity and sustainability of organisational performance among Kenya County, there is need of knowledge-based evidence; hence this study.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Kenya established a new constitution so the year 2010 into effectively devolve development, establishing 47 county governments across the country as the only level of devolved administration (Mose, 2020). The majority of central government functions and duties for public service planning and delivery were transferred to county governments under this constitution (Waribu, 2021). This is a step toward expediting grassroots socioeconomic development of public benefits and improving public service delivery (Waikenda, Lewa & Muchara, 2019). Despite the fact that most counties' service delivery is doing quite well, a handful of counties, particularly Kitui County, need to enhance their organisational performance (Moses et al., 2020). These counties have failed to deliver effective services. These counties have been criticized for; stalled projects, under-development and massive wastage of public resources (Mutuku, Agusioma & Wambua, 2021). The Controller of budget reports show that the performance of County government of Kitui has been on a downward trend over the past years with a performance of 68.0% in 2019/20, 54.4% in 2020/21, 45.2% in 2021/22 and a worrying 35.6% in 2022/23. This steady decline trend brought serious questions on the performance of the county in service delivery in relation to the goals of devolution in Kenya. This makes it challenging for these counties to accomplish high-performance. Therefore, it is essential to develop new strategies that can add value. Effective succession planning ensures organizational continuity by identifying and developing employees to fill key positions that become vacant due to retirement, resignation or promotion. However, there is dearth of empirical research in this area since the extant empirical literature in these areas has methodological, conceptual, contextual, and empirical; gaps. This study filled these gaps in its effort to provide evidence-based insight into link between the succession planning strategies organizational performance of Kenyan County government.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

To determine the relationship between succession planning strategies and the organizational performance of Kitui county government.

## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between succession planning strategies and organizational performance of Kitui county government

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study was anchored on Knowledge-Based View (KBV) theory. The KBV theory offers a valuable lens through which to understand the relationship between succession planning strategies and organizational performance, particularly in public institutions such as the Kitui County Government. Emerging as an extension of the Resource-Based View (RBV), KBV emphasizes that knowledge is the most strategically important asset an organization possesses. Scholars such as Grant (1996) and Kogut and Zander (1992) argue that organizations exist not merely to produce goods and services but to create, integrate, and apply specialized knowledge more effectively than markets can. At its core, the theory rests on several key assumptions. First, that knowledge, particularly tacit knowledge, is unique, difficult to replicate, and not easily transferable, making it a source of sustained competitive advantage. Second, the heterogeneity of knowledge bases and capabilities among organizations is a primary determinant of differences in organizational performance. Third, KBV assumes that organizational learning processes, such as mentorship, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing systems, are essential for transforming individual expertise into collective organizational competence. In the context of the current study, KBV provides a strong theoretical foundation for assessing how succession planning strategies affect organizational performance in Kitui County. Public institutions, especially county governments, face high staff turnover due to retirement, transfers, and political transitions. As such, they risk losing critical institutional knowledge and experience. KBV explains why structured succession planning, through strategies like mentoring, documentation, and talent development, is essential for retaining knowledge, maintaining operational continuity, and improving service delivery. Moreover, the theory highlights the importance of knowledge transfer mechanisms in ensuring that the departure of key staff does not disrupt the organization’s capacity to function efficiently. For Kitui County, where organizational sustainability is closely tied to the availability and application of technical and managerial knowledge, KBV underscores the role of succession planning in preserving institutional memory and enhancing decision-making quality. KBV remains highly applicable to public sector contexts, particularly as knowledge becomes increasingly recognized as a driver of performance and innovation. In applying KBV, this study acknowledges that succession planning is not simply a human resource function, but a strategic knowledge management process that contributes significantly to organizational resilience and effectiveness in county governments such as Kitui County Government.

# **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Recent research emphasizes the important contribution of succession planning to the performance of public- and private-sector organizations. Research in a number of countries shows that effective succession planning fosters leadership continuity, employee development, talent retention, and institutional performance. These studies provide valuable data on how succession planning is implemented by different organizations and its measurable impact on performance, providing lessons and comparative insights that inform strategic human resource practice globally. In business, Sholesi, Adewale, and Adeniyi (2022) explored the impact of succession planning at Perfetti Van Melle Nigeria Limited, their population being 1,392 employees. The study affirmed that talent retention and mentoring, as core succession planning techniques, exerted marginal but positive effects on organizational performance. This suggests that marginal improvements through systematic succession strategies can enhance operational efficiency. In the business context of Pakistan, 300 workers were surveyed by Zafar and Akhtar (2020) through convenience sampling to explore the role of succession planning on growth. Logistic regression revealed that effective succession planning significantly scaled up organizational growth through effective recruitment and retention of key individuals.

Specifically targeting the public sector, Wanje (2022) surveyed 230 employees of the Kilifi County Government. While the company did an excellent job of recruitment and possessed a highly established leadership structure, it was missing the essential succession planning elements of mentoring, in-job training, and active talent holding. This absence of elements worked to fuel employee disgruntlement, turnover, and reduced readiness. While HR had employed reactive tools such as gap analysis and rapid replacement policy, the absence of a clearly established succession framework limited its performance

In banking in Kenya, Ahmed (2020) explored succession planning at Family Bank through a survey of 92 employees in HR using structured questionnaires. Results indicated that talent management, skills gap assessment, mentorship, and career progression were core to enhancing workforce efficiency, productivity, and readiness for leadership. Despite the bank facing challenges with full implementation of succession strategies, practices were positively correlated with organizational stability and performance. At Migori County's Sony Sugar Company, Akinyi and Nyanamba (2019) took a sample of 60 employees using stratified random sampling. They indicated that human resource planning had already factored succession considerations in, showing consideration of leadership continuity as a bedrock to maintaining performance.

In Iran, Hosseini, Barzoki, and Isfahani (2018) applied a mixed-method approach with two-stage structural equation modeling to evaluate succession management at Esfahan Steel Company. From a sample of managers and supervisors, their finding confirmed that a comprehensive, seven-dimensional succession management system which included cultural, infrastructural, and evaluative dimensions correlated positively and significantly with organizational performance at the 95% confidence level. These studies provide compelling narrative: in diverse organizational contexts, covering manufacturing and banking, county governments, succession planning is recognized as an organizational performance improvement device. Effective succession methods, particularly those that include mentoring, talent management, training, and formal mechanisms, not only guarantee business continuity but also facilitate development, stability, and leadership readiness

# **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study used a correlational research design, which lays a vital role in understanding relationships between variables without manipulating them. This helped relationship between succession planning strategies and the organizational performance of Kitui county government

The study population consisted of all 8114 staffs in the county government of Kitui. The study adopted Krejcie and Morgan Table (1970) leading to a sample size of 367 participants. The study used stratified sampling and simple random sampling designs. Thus, the study consisted of 10 strata each corresponding to the department in a county government of Kitui. From each stratum, simple random sampling was used to select informants for the study.

Data were collected using questionnaire and interview guide. Reliability of research instrument using internal consistency by use of Cronbach’s coefficient Alpha. The Cronbach’s coefficient Alpha was 0.742, which was greater than 0.7 threshold. Validity was measured using content validity where the scrutiny was done by the research supervisors and the experts Factor analysis was conducted to assess the construct validity where results demonstrated strong validity with knowledge transfer showing the highest factor loading at 0.792.

Data analysis was done using both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis approaches. Data was analyzed to yield descriptive statistics while Pearson correlation was to establish existence of the relationships and multiple regression analysis to determine the combined effects of the independent variables on organizational performance. The quantitative data was entered in Statistical Package for Social Sciences Software (SPSS version 23).

# **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

## **8.1 Descriptives for Organizational Performance**

Respondents were required to state their level of agreement with statements related to organizational performance in Kitui County Government using a scale where 1 represented Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 Disagree (D), 3 Agree (A) and 4 Strongly Agree (SA).

Table 1

Organizational Performance

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statement** | **N** | **Min** | **Max** | **Mean** | **Std. Dev.** |
| **Service Quality** | | | | | |
| The services provided by Kitui county government are delivered in a timely manner within set timeframe | 277 | 1 | 4 | 2.59 | 1.027 |
| Kitui county government provides services that meet stakeholders’ expectations. | 277 | 1 | 4 | 2.57 | 1.083 |
| Kitui county government provides updates on the progress being made on a timely basis. | 277 | 1 | 4 | 2.57 | 1.056 |
| Kitui county government services are easily accessible to all residents with convenience. | 277 | 1 | 4 | 2.67 | 1.075 |
| Kitui county government actively seeks and documents feedback to improve its services. | 277 | 1 | 4 | 2.68 | 1.043 |
| **Aggregate Score** |  | | | **2.616** | **1.0568** |
| **Sustainability** | | | | | |
| There is cost-effectiveness of service delivery in terms of the resources utilized by Kitui county government | 277 | 1 | 4 | 2.67 | 1.010 |
| Kitui county government is committed to ensuring its long-term viability and resilience | 277 | 1 | 4 | 2.70 | 1.050 |
| Kitui county government ensures transparency and accountability in various service delivery. | 277 | 1 | 4 | 2.83 | 1.047 |
| The administrative leadership and management of the county has improved the lives of residents | 277 | 1 | 4 | 2.75 | 1.089 |
| The county prioritizes and focuses service delivery ensuring resources are effectively allocated and key projects get the focus as planned | 277 | 1 | 4 | 2.63 | 1.050 |
| **Aggregate score** |  | | | **2.716** | **1.0492** |
| **Overall aggregate score** |  | | | **2.666** | **1.053** |

The organizational performance findings, quantified along two factors, sustainability and service quality, indicate a general moderate level of respondent perception regarding the performance of Kitui County Government. Under the service quality dimension, the results (M= 2.62; SD = 1.06), meant that most respondents had slightly negative to neutral attitudes. More specifically, the measure that services are completed within the set time frame averaged (M= 2.59; SD = 1.03), which indicates dissatisfaction with delays or inefficiency in delivering services. Consistently, the county government's stakeholder expectation fulfillment was low-rated at (M= 2.57; SD = 1.08) to indicate a shortfall in service provision and stakeholder need. Moreover, the statement on the timeliness of reporting progress was also equally low-rated at (M= 2.57; SD = 1.06) to indicate possible shortfall in communication as well as openness. Little better but still below standards were hopes for services to be accessible and feedback mechanisms. Convenience to get services scored (M= 2.67; SD = 1.08), and the actions of the county in securing and registering feedback to improve services scored (M= 2.68; SD = 1.04). This suggests that systems may be available to enable accessibility as well as the collection of feedback but lack publicity or effectiveness in the public eye.

On sustainability, the average score of (M= 2.72; SD = 1.05) was slightly more favorable than service quality but less robust than would be anticipated. A score of (M= 2.67; SD = 1.01) for cost-effectiveness in service delivery indicated that the public may not perceive a scenario of optimal utilization of resources. The county's commitment to long-term sustainability and resilience was rated (M= 2.70; SD = 1.05), showing that while the efforts in this aspect are acknowledged, they are not yet convincing or firm.

The highest rated item in both aspects was the transparency and accountability in service delivery by the county, which registered (M= 2.83; SD = 1.05). Although this score is relatively stronger, it is still below the scale's midpoint, which means that judgments of transparency, although more favorable, are reserved. The question of whether administrative leadership has changed life for the better was rated at (2.75; SD = 1.09), which suggests a mixed view, some may have viewed a change for the positive, but others did not. The ability of the county to prioritize delivery of services and utilize resources was rated (2.63; SD = 1.05), again highlighting perceived inefficiencies in strategic planning and project implementation. On aggregate, the organizational performance score (M= 2.67; SD = 1.05), indicated a moderate rating of performance with possible important improvement in all areas assessed. The relatively high standard deviations across statements indicate considerable variation in responses and likely indicate variation in individual experiences, departmental interactions, or availability of services by different areas of the county.

The findings of the current study concur with research by Munyui (2015), that sustainability was influenced by community participation, technology and financial support. Conversely, the findings of the current study diverged from those of Kinyili (2025), residents were dissatisfied with waste management services in Kitui County, pointing to poor sustainability performance; which contradicts the more positive average scores observed in the present study. They also diverged from the findings of Mwendwa and Senelwa (2023), that poor governance, unethical practices, and ineffective human resource management significantly hindered sustainable development, challenging the notion of moderate sustainability performance reported in the current study.

## **8.2 Descriptive on Succession Planning Strategies**

The researcher sought to establish the respondent’s level of agreement in reference to organization practices related to the succession planning strategies using a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree).

Table 2 Knowledge Transfer Strategies

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Description** | **N** | **Mean** | | **Std. Dev.** | |
| All operational procedures and processes are documented and staff leaving Kitui county government archive valuable information | 277 | 2.64 | | 1.032 | |
| Electronic and manual guides are readily available for reference when needed in Kitui county government | 277 | 2.71 | | 1.069 | |
| Documentation of processes and procedures eliminates having a single source of business valuable information in Kitui county government | 277 | 2.48 | | 1.044 | |
| Kitui county government facilitates easy identification and connection with subject matter experts whenever the staffs raise concern on knowledge gaps. | 277 | 2.44 | | 1.064 | |
| There are measurable indicators to assess the impact of knowledge management on organizational performance in Kitui county government | 277 | 2.56 | | 1.015 | |
| **Aggregate score** | **2.566** | | **1.0448** | |
| Kitui county government promotes formal and informal exchanges with constructive feedback | 277 | 2.68 | | 1.022 | |
| Kitui county government has documented well-defined goals and expectations of mentoring and coaching programs | 277 | 2.70 | | 1.070 | |
| New employees follow experienced employees performing expected job tasks and responsibilities for the position in Kitui county government | 277 | 2.49 | | 1.062 | |
| Kitui county government recognizes and appreciates the contributions of mentors by rewarding them | 277 | 2.64 | | 1.043 | |
| Kitui county government has structured mentorship and coaching programs in place | 277 | 2.71 | | 1.098 | |
| **Aggregate score** |  | **2.644** | | **1.059** | |
| Kitui county government carries effective training needs assessment through 360-degree feedback | 277 | 2.78 | | 1.078 | |
| Kitui county government uses job shadowing is used to provide development opportunity to employee | 277 | 2.73 | | 1.112 | |
| Kitui county government has well documented training and development plans, goals and strategies | 277 | 2.69 | | 1.131 | |
| Kitui county government promotes professional development through education and training | 277 | 2.69 | | 1.128 | |
| Kitui county government have incentives attached to the training | 277 | 2.82 | | 1.074 | |
| **Aggregate score** | **2.742** | | **1.1046** | |
| Kitui county government holds departmental teams to transfer that knowledge and build understanding | 277 | 2.73 | | 1.171 | |
| Members encourages periodic reviews to establish areas of improvement | 277 | 2.64 | | 1.146 | |
| Members engage in sharing best practices, experiences and insights related to their professional roles through various forums | 277 | 2.56 | | 1.071 | |
| Communities of practice are integrated into the organization's learning and development strategy. | 277 | 2.74 | | 1.059 | |
| Resources within communities of practice are easily accessible to all interested employees. | 277 | 2.71 | | 1.074 | |
| Aggregate score | **2.676** | | **1.1042** | |
| Kitui county government encourages two-way communication to transfer business critical information to all employees. | 277 | 2.59 | | 1.048 | |
| Employees are encouraged to voice their opinions, share feedback and discuss any work-related matters. | 277 | 2.76 | | 1.077 | |
| The open-door policy is often used as a means of resolving conflicts | 277 | 2.82 | | 1.084 | |
| Various heads of sections actively support and encourage open communication in matters | 277 | 2.67 | | 1.049 | |
| There is transparency and inclusiveness in the workplace in a bid to create a more collaborative and productive work environment | 277 | 2.50 | | 1.002 | |
| **Aggregate score** |  | **2.668** | | **1.052** | |
| **Overall aggregate score** |  | **2.6592** | | **1.0729** | |

The assessment of Knowledge Transfer Strategies in Kitui County Government reveals generally moderate implementation across multiple strategic areas, with most indicators scoring below the optimal threshold on a 4-point Likert scale. The overall aggregate score of the knowledge transfer strategies stands at (M = 2.66; SD = 1.07), suggesting that while foundational structures may exist, they are not consistently applied or effectively institutionalized.

In the area of knowledge documentation, the aggregate score was (M = 2.57; SD = 1.04). Most respondents moderately agreed that operational procedures and processes are documented and that valuable information is archived when staff exit the organization (M = 2.64; SD = 1.03). Additionally, both electronic and manual guides are perceived as readily available when needed (M = 2.71; SD = 1.07), indicating some access to reference materials. However, the notion that documentation helps avoid reliance on a single source of business-critical information received a lower rating (M = 2.48; SD = 1.04), suggesting potential knowledge silos. Likewise, the county’s facilitation of identifying and connecting with subject matter experts in cases of knowledge gaps scored (M = 2.44; SD = 1.06), revealing a weakness in informal knowledge flow. The presence of measurable indicators to assess the impact of knowledge management on performance also received a modest score of (M = 2.56; SD = 1.02), reflecting a limited use of metrics in evaluating knowledge initiatives.

In terms of mentorship and coaching, Kitui County Government performed slightly better, with an aggregate score of (M = 2.64; SD = 1.06). The existence of formal and informal exchanges with constructive feedback scored (M = 2.68; SD = 1.02), and the documentation of clear goals for mentoring programs was similarly rated (M = 2.70; SD = 1.07). Respondents acknowledged that new employees shadow experienced staff as part of their orientation (M = 2.49; SD = 1.06), though the relatively low score suggests this practice is not widespread or standardized. Recognition of mentors through rewards received (M = 2.64; SD = 1.04), and the existence of structured mentorship programs was rated (M = 2.71; SD = 1.10). These findings indicate moderate implementation of mentoring programs, with opportunities for further institutionalization.

The dimension of training and development emerged as the highest-rated area, with an aggregate score of (M = 2.74; SD = 1.10). Effective training needs assessment using 360-degree feedback received a relatively strong score of (M = 2.78; SD = 1.08), suggesting a proactive approach to identifying development gaps. Job shadowing as a development tool also rated positively (M = 2.73; SD = 1.11), as did the documentation of training plans, goals, and strategies (M = 2.69; SD = 1.13). The promotion of professional development through education and training scored (M = 2.69; SD = 1.13), and training incentives received the highest rating in this section at (M = 2.82; SD = 1.07), indicating that incentive-based learning is one of the better-supported knowledge transfer practices.

The knowledge-sharing culture within teams and communities of practice received an aggregate score of (M = 2.68; SD = 1.10). The organization holds departmental forums for knowledge transfer (M = 2.73; SD = 1.17), and members are encouraged to periodically review performance to identify areas for improvement (M = 2.64; SD = 1.15). The sharing of best practices and professional insights was rated (M = 2.56; SD = 1.07), suggesting moderate engagement in peer learning. Communities of practice are reportedly integrated into learning strategies (M = 2.74; SD = 1.06), and the accessibility of resources within these communities scored (M = 2.71; SD = 1.07). This reflects a positive perception of team-level knowledge collaboration, though with variation in effectiveness across departments.

The area of communication for knowledge transfer was rated with an aggregate score of (M = 2.67; SD = 1.05). Two-way communication of business-critical information scored (M = 2.59; SD = 1.05), suggesting a need for improved top-down and bottom-up communication structures. The encouragement of staff to voice opinions and share feedback was rated (M = 2.76; SD = 1.08), while the open-door policy as a conflict resolution tool scored relatively high at (M = 2.82; SD = 1.08). The active support of open communication by section heads received (M = 2.67; SD = 1.05), and transparency and inclusiveness in the workplace was perceived less favorably (M = 2.50; SD = 1.00), indicating a need to foster more inclusive and collaborative environments.

On aggregate, the results suggest that while Kitui County Government has initiated various knowledge transfer mechanisms, they are still evolving and unevenly applied across departments. The high standard deviations across most items (all above 1.0) reflect considerable variation in employee experiences, which could be attributed to inconsistent implementation, departmental disparities, or communication gaps. These findings highlight key areas for strengthening, particularly in expert access, inclusiveness, and strategic documentation, to improve knowledge management and, ultimately, organizational performance.

From the interviews conducted with the HR officer, it was revealed that knowledge transfer systems have been instituted but with moderate effectiveness.

*“We have established succession planning strategies* *though their effectiveness varies... technological infrastructure limitations and staff digital literacy affect utilization... generational differences among employees influence adoption rates... continuous improvement is an ongoing process.” [HRO3, 2025]*

This indicates that while systems exist, their impact on organizational outcomes remains inconsistent.

On the effectiveness of mentoring and coaching programs, the HR officer noted that implementation challenges arise from workload demands and departmental variations.

An officer said

*“Our mentoring program pairs experienced staff with newer employees... implementation faces challenges due to workload demands... departmental variations exist in program structure... knowledge transfer occurs but with inconsistent results across departments.”[HRO5, 2025]*

Regarding training and development, it was noted that training is conducted periodically to improve service delivery but challenges persist.

Another on said that

*“We conduct periodic training initiatives to enhance service delivery... attendance is sometimes affected by operational demands... practical application of training content varies... post‑training support mechanisms need strengthening.”*

On communities of practice, the HR officer explained that cross‑departmental knowledge sharing occurs but is not fully structured.

*There was an officer who said that*

*“Cross‑departmental knowledge sharing occurs but is not fully structured... documentation of insights happens sporadically... it is on a need‑basis.”*

This suggests that while informal communities of practice exist, they are not systematically leveraged for organizational learning.

The findings of the current study are reinforced by previous research that highlights both the promise and the uneven implementation of knowledge management, mentoring and training strategies in Kitui County. Kimanzi, Kabui and Mutiiria (2024) found that knowledge succession positively influenced the continuity of community-based organizations but emphasized that its effectiveness was contingent upon the presence of robust digital infrastructure and mentorship systems echoing the current study’s observation of moderate effectiveness and high variability in knowledge transfer and coaching practices. Similarly, Geoffrey and Muli (2024) demonstrated that while training and development significantly enhanced employee service delivery in the Kitui County Government, implementation was inconsistent across departments. This supports the current study’s finding that training emerged as the most prominent knowledge transfer strategy, yet still exhibited high standard deviations, indicating varied impact. Wambua (2015) also confirmed that although community development training centers played a role in building local capacity, their performance was undermined by resource constraints and staffing challenges paralleling the present study’s results that show training initiatives are present but their effectiveness is uneven due to operational limitations. Collectively, these studies substantiate the current study’s conclusion that while strategic human resource practices such as training, mentoring, and knowledge sharing are being implemented, their outcomes remain inconsistent across the county.

Conversely, the findings of the current study diverge from those of Mulu (2016), who found that despite the availability of project documentation and knowledge systems in Kitui County, their actual utilization was poor, resulting in suboptimal project performance. Mulu attributed this underuse to a lack of awareness, insufficient training, and weak integration into daily workflows contradicting the current study’s moderately positive ratings and relatively active engagement with knowledge management systems.

**7.3 Correlation Analysis**

Table 3

Correlation Analysis Results

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | | Organizational performance |
| Knowledge Transfer | Pearson Correlation | .842\*\* |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| N | 277 |

Based on the results the probability value (p-value) was 0.000 presented as p<0.01. Since p<0.01 was less than the 0.05 threshold, then the null hypothesis was rejected This implied that there was statistically significant relationship between succession planning strategies and organizational performance of Kitui County Government. The correlation coefficient (r) was 0.842, which greater than 0.6. This meant that there was a strong positive relationship correlation. This finding indicates that improvements in knowledge transfer are strongly associated with enhanced organizational outcomes within Kitui County Government.

**7.4 Regression Coefficients**

In that there was relationship between the independent variable (knowledge transfer strategies) and the dependent variable (organization performance), regression analysis was carried out to establish a model to predict dependent variable in terms of the independent variable. The outcomes of regression coefficients is in table 4.

Table 4.: Regression Coefficients

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Coefficientsa** | | | | | | |
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
| B | Std. Error | Beta |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.335 | .208 |  | 5.613 | .008 |
| Knowledge Transfer | .478 | .068 | .484 | 6.990 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance | | | | | | |

The results (B = 0.478, p = 0.000) show a p-value (p<0.01 as less than 05. This was sufficient evidence that succession planning strategies was a predictor of organizational performance of Kitui County Government. A constant of 1.335 suggests that when all factors under study are held constant, the baseline organizational performance e remains at 1.335. The results further reveal that a unit increase in knowledge transfer would lead to a 0.478 improvement in organizational performance and vice versa. The resulting regression equation as follows;

Organizational Performance = 1.335 + 0.478(Knowledge Management)

1. **DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS**

It was found that in Kitui County Government, there were knowledge management systems in place and accessible where employees could consult both electronic and manual guides whenever they needed to do so. This supported the findings of Sholesi et al. (2022), where they stated that availability of systems was not sufficient; effective mentorship and support must be in place to record organizational performance enhancements. Similarly, despite the investment in coaching and mentoring programs by the Kitui County, experience within departments was not uniform. Wanje (2022) research in Kilifi County Government corroborated this issue: even effective recruitment processes were thwarted by inadequate strong mentoring and training, disabling staff satisfaction as well as overall performance.

Training and development initiatives were pointed out as an area of strength, particularly because some of the sessions were associated with rewards. Practical challenges in the form of excessive workloads and the absence of follow-through support after training, however, limited the actual impact of these programs. The same applied in the research carried out by Ahmed (2020) on Family Bank, where structured talent management programs improved productivity and readiness but were hampered by execution limitations. Communities of practice were acknowledged as part of Kitui’s learning strategy, yet engagement remained informal and occasional rather than systematic. This contrasted with findings from Hosseini, Barzoki, and Isfahani (2018) in Iran, where structured, multi-dimensional communities of practice significantly enhanced organizational performance. Their work emphasized that intentional design and institutional support were crucial to transforming sharing spaces into performance-enhancing tools. The open-door policy was also viewed positively concerning conflict resolution but was not effective in spurring openness and cooperation across the organization. This showed that, like with other policies noted in Wanje (2022), culture and implementation were better than on-paper declarations.

Most importantly, the study established a firm link between knowledge transfer approaches' efficacy and enhanced performance in the County. This was supplemented by broader empirical evidence: Zafar and Akhtar (2020) demonstrated that efficient succession planning, here focusing on recruitment and retention, significantly enhanced organizational development. Likewise, Sholesi et al. (2022) documented how retention and mentoring measures, even smaller-scale ones, had measurable beneficial effects on performance. In essence, these findings were consistent with empirical studies on varied contexts. Mere possession of formal systems was only the initial step; real influence resulted from the presence of a culture of regular utilization, facilitative settings, and coordinated mechanisms converting knowledge to organizational practice. For Kitui County Government, this emphasized the need for the construction of mentorship, establishing communities of practice, enhancing post-training support, and anchoring policies in an enabling environment, measures that were pillars to the maintenance of organizational performance.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study conclude that succession planning strategies has a statistically significant positive effect of organizational performance of Kitui County Government (r = 0.842; β = 0.478; p<0.01),.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To strengthen knowledge management systems, Kitui county government should invest in developing robust knowledge management infrastructure that centralizes information storage, retrieval, and sharing. This should include implementing user-friendly digital platforms that address the varying levels of digital literacy among staff. The county should formalize mentorship programs by establishing structured mentorship and coaching frameworks with clear objectives, pairing guidelines, and evaluation mechanisms. These programs should include dedicated time allocations within work schedules to ensure consistent implementation despite operational demands. Enhancing cross-generational knowledge exchange requires implementing targeted initiatives that bridge generational differences in knowledge transfer, such as reverse mentoring programs where younger employees share technological skills while seasoned employees share institutional knowledge and experience. Developing knowledge capture protocols means instituting mandatory knowledge documentation procedures for departing employees, including comprehensive handover notes, process documentation, and recorded knowledge-sharing sessions to preserve critical institutional knowledge. Finally, training should be integrated with performance measurement by connecting training and development initiatives directly to performance metrics to ensure knowledge gained is applied effectively, with post-training support mechanisms and follow-up evaluations to reinforce learning transfer to the workplace.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The study reveals the reality that while Kitui County Government has put in place various succession planning practices such as knowledge management systems, mentoring, training, and communities of practice, their deployment is not uniform across departments due to factors such as work demands, technology limitation, and lack of official implementation. In practice, this means that the county government will have to supplement these systems, especially knowledge management and mentoring, through paying attention to operating issues, expanding digital infrastructure, aligning practices, and building support after training in a bid to optimize organizational performance benefits**.**

## **SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Improved succession planning initiatives result in improved organizational performance, which is translated into more efficient and transparent public service delivery to the people. Through improved knowledge transfer and capacity improvement, the county government is able to establish lasting continuity amidst staff turnover, which subsequently translates into dividends for citizens through extended, quality governance and improved public sector responsiveness. Furthermore, open-door policies and communities of practice are practices of inclusion that support the collaborative workplace, and can improve staff morale and motivation to serve, which increases public trust in institutions.

## **THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The theoretical implication of the research is that it facilitates the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) with empirical evidence that succession planning practices such as mentoring, training, and knowledge-sharing systems are requirements for knowledge transfer and organizational performance maintenance. It demonstrates that in such public organizations as Kitui County Government, knowledge transfer is not just an HR function but a strategic process of value that sustains institutional memory and enhances service delivery, substantiating KBV's view of knowledge as a critical organizational asset.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Although this study relied heavily on self-report questionnaires, social desirability response bias is a significant threat. Participants may have overestimated or underestimated their perceptions for personal or political reasons. While interviews were conducted, these were confined to HR officers and not pushed to broader stakeholder groups such as line managers, supervisors, or junior staff. This might have reduced the qualitative insight into the actual implementation challenges of succession planning strategies. The study was conducted within the specific administrative, cultural, and political context of Kitui County Government. Therefore, the findings may not be easily generalizable to other county governments or public sector organizations with different structures or practices.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

1. Future studies should be cross-county in comparison to see whether the findings in Kitui apply elsewhere. This would improve the generalizability of the result.
2. A longitudinal study would be capable of assessing the long-term impact of succession planning methods on organizational performance, rather than just an assessment of perceptions at one point in time.
3. With noted variations across departments, case studies per department may illuminate the underlying reasons for variations in knowledge transfer, mentoring, or training effectiveness.
4. Subsequent studies can include a broader group of participants such as frontline workers, middle managers, and external stakeholders to better learn about the effectiveness and difficulties of succession planning.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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