LEVERAGING CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR IMPROVED STAFF RETENTION: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM HUMAN RESOURCE CONSULTANCY FIRMS IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Human resource consultancy firms operate in highly competitive and knowledge-driven environments where attracting and retaining competent employees remains a major strategic concern. Despite the growing importance of human capital in sustaining organizational performance, many consultancy firms continue to experience high employee turnover, loss of skilled personnel, declining employee commitment, and increasing recruitment and training costs. Career development initiatives have increasingly emerged as critical human resource strategies aimed at improving employee motivation, professional growth, job satisfaction, and long-term retention. This study examined the effect of career development initiatives on staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study is anchored on Human Capital Theory and Social Exchange Theory, which collectively explained how investment in employee growth enhances organizational commitment and retention. A descriptive research design was adopted targeting management employees from registered human resource consultancy firms operating in Nairobi County. Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered through a five-point Likert scale. Validity and reliability of the research instrument were established through expert review and pilot testing. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression analysis. The findings established that career development initiatives had a statistically significant positive effect on staff retention. Specifically, mentorship programs, promotion opportunities, professional training, career progression structures, and succession development enhanced employee commitment, job satisfaction, and long-term organizational attachment. The study recommends that management of human resource consultancy firms should strengthen career development frameworks by investing in continuous professional development, structured mentorship systems, transparent promotion policies, and employee growth opportunities to improve retention of skilled personnel. Strengthening career development initiatives can enable consultancy firms to enhance employee loyalty, reduce turnover costs, and maintain organizational competitiveness in the dynamic human resource consulting industry.

Key words: Career Development, Staff Retention, Employee Development, Human Resource Consulting Firms.

INTRODUCTION

Employee retention remains a major concern among organizations operating in highly dynamic and competitive business environments. Staff retention refers to an organization's ability to retain competent employees for sustained periods while minimizing voluntary turnover and maintaining workforce stability (Yameen, Bharadwaj & Ahmad, 2021). Organizations increasingly recognize that employees represent strategic assets whose knowledge, skills, and competencies contribute significantly toward organizational productivity, innovation, customer satisfaction, and long-term competitiveness. Consequently, firms continue to invest in human resource practices capable of enhancing employee commitment, motivation, and organizational loyalty. One of the most important human resource strategies widely adopted across organizations is career development initiatives, which focus on supporting employee growth, professional advancement, skill enhancement, and career progression within organizations.

Globally, organizations operating in knowledge-intensive industries increasingly implement career development initiatives such as mentorship programs, leadership development, succession planning, professional certification support, and internal promotion systems to improve employee retention and organizational performance (Dachner et al., 2021). In developed economies such as the United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom, organizations that invest heavily in employee career growth continue to report lower turnover rates, improved employee engagement, and stronger organizational commitment. Nevertheless, firms lacking structured career development systems often experience increased employee dissatisfaction, reduced motivation, talent loss, and weakened institutional performance.

In Africa, organizations continue to face growing challenges associated with employee turnover, talent migration, and shortage of specialized professional skills. Human resource consultancy firms particularly experience difficulties in retaining highly skilled employees due to increased competition, limited promotion opportunities, and inadequate employee growth systems (Saayman, Slabbert & Ottebacher, 2023). Although many firms have introduced professional development programs, mentorship initiatives, and career progression structures, retention challenges continue to affect organizational stability and service delivery. In Kenya, human resource consultancy firms play a critical role in supporting organizations through recruitment, talent management, employee training, organizational development, performance management, and strategic human resource planning. However, the sector continues to experience significant workforce retention challenges characterized by increased employee mobility, high turnover intentions, and loss of experienced professionals to competing organizations (Muthumbi & Kamau, 2021). Career development initiatives have therefore emerged as important strategic interventions capable of enhancing employee satisfaction, professional growth, organizational commitment, and long-term retention within consultancy firms.

Statement of the Problem

Human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County continue to experience significant staff retention challenges despite increased investment in human resource management practices and employee welfare programs. The consultancy industry is highly knowledge-driven and depends heavily on skilled professionals capable of delivering specialized human resource services such as recruitment, organizational development, talent management, and strategic advisory services. However, many consultancy firms continue to experience increased employee turnover, reduced workforce stability, loss of institutional knowledge, and rising recruitment and training costs associated with employee exits (Ushakov & Shatila, 2021).

According to the Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE, 2023), approximately 46% of professional service firms in Kenya reported increased voluntary employee turnover between 2021 and 2023, particularly among highly skilled middle-level professionals seeking better career growth opportunities. Similarly, the Institute of Human Resource Management (IHRM, 2023) established that nearly 52% of employees working in consultancy and professional service firms expressed dissatisfaction with career progression opportunities within their organizations. Additionally, Deloitte Kenya (2023) reported that organizations lacking structured career development systems experienced higher turnover intentions, reduced employee engagement, and lower organizational commitment compared to organizations with well-established employee growth programs.

Staff retention remains a critical concern among human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County due to increasing competition for skilled employees and growing employee expectations regarding career growth and professional advancement. According to LinkedIn Workforce Report (2023), approximately 48% of employees in professional service firms consider career advancement opportunities as the primary determinant of their decision to remain in an organization. Similarly, PwC Kenya (2022) noted that organizations with weak mentorship systems, unclear promotion structures, and inadequate professional development opportunities experience significantly higher employee turnover rates. High turnover continues to expose consultancy firms to operational disruptions, increased recruitment costs, reduced service quality, and weakened organizational competitiveness.

Although several empirical studies have examined employee development and staff retention, contextual and methodological gaps remain evident. Ferdiana, Khan, and Ray (2023) examined career development and employee retention in Asian organizations and established that career development positively influences employee commitment and retention. However, the study focused on multinational corporations within Asian contexts, limiting applicability to human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya. Thwin, Janarthanan, and Bhaumik (2023) studied the relationship between career advancement and employee retention but concentrated on manufacturing organizations rather than consultancy firms. Similarly, Muthumbi and Kamau (2021) investigated employee development practices in professional service firms in Kenya but focused on organizational productivity instead of staff retention. Therefore, despite the growing importance of career development initiatives in enhancing workforce stability, limited empirical evidence exists on how career development initiatives influence staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya. Consequently, this study sought to examine how career development initiatives impact staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Research Objective

The study sought to examine how career development initiatives impacted staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses for this survey were:

H_o: *Career development initiatives have no statistically significant effect on staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya.*

H_a: *Career development initiatives have a statistically significant effect on staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya.*

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

The study is grounded on the Human Capital Theory and Social Exchange Theory, which jointly provide the theoretical foundation for explaining the relationship between career development and staff retention among human resource consultancy firms.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory was developed by Gary Becker (1964) and Theodore Schultz (1961), who argued that organizations and individuals can improve productivity and performance through investment in education, training, knowledge, and skill development. The theory views employees as valuable organizational assets whose competencies and expertise contribute significantly toward organizational success. According to Becker (1964), investments in employee development through training, mentorship, career progression, and professional growth enhance employee productivity, efficiency, and long-term organizational competitiveness. Consequently, organizations that invest in employee growth are more likely to achieve improved organizational performance and workforce stability.

The theory assumes that investment in employee education, training, and career development generates measurable returns such as improved productivity, career advancement, organizational effectiveness, and increased employee commitment (Fix, 2021). It further assumes that employees are willing to develop their competencies because they expect future benefits including promotion opportunities, professional growth, and better career prospects (Jin & Waldman, 2020). Additionally, Human Capital Theory presumes that organizations can evaluate the effectiveness of employee development initiatives through outcomes such as improved employee performance, reduced turnover, and enhanced organizational productivity.

Despite its relevance, the theory has received criticism for focusing heavily on economic returns while overlooking the social and psychological aspects of employee development. Critics argue that factors such as employee well-being, organizational culture, and personal satisfaction also influence employee growth and retention but are not adequately addressed by the theory (Marginson, 2019). Furthermore, the theory assumes that employees always make rational career investment decisions, yet career choices are also influenced by social, organizational, and environmental factors (Ridley, 2024). Nevertheless, Human Capital Theory remains widely applicable in organizational studies because it provides a strong framework for explaining how investment in employee growth enhances organizational capability and workforce stability.

Human Capital Theory underpins career development initiatives in the current study by explaining how organizations improve employee competence and organizational performance through strategic investment in employee growth. Career development initiatives such as mentorship programs, professional training, career progression opportunities, leadership development, and succession planning enhance employee knowledge, skills, and professional capability (Yusoff, Ahmad, & Ismail, 2022). In human resource consultancy firms, employees are key organizational resources whose expertise and competencies determine service quality and organizational competitiveness. Therefore, organizations that invest in employee career growth are more likely to enhance employee satisfaction, strengthen organizational commitment, and improve staff retention. Consequently, the theory was considered appropriate for this study because it explains how career development initiatives contribute toward workforce stability and employee retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory was developed by Homans (1958) and later expanded by Blau (1964). The theory explains that relationships within organizations are based on mutual exchanges between employers and employees. According to the theory, employees are likely to remain committed to organizations that provide favorable treatment such as support, recognition, career growth opportunities, and professional development. When employees perceive that the organization values their contribution and invests in their well-being, they tend to reciprocate through loyalty, commitment, and long-term attachment to the organization (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017). The theory assumes that employees evaluate organizational relationships based on expected benefits and costs. Employees are more likely to remain in organizations where benefits such as mentorship, training opportunities, promotion prospects, and career support outweigh the potential gains of leaving the organization (Cook, Cheshire, Rice, & Nakagawa, 2013). The theory further suggests that fair treatment and organizational support strengthen trust and positive relationships between employees and employers, thereby enhancing workforce stability and reducing turnover intentions.

Despite its relevance, social exchange theory has been criticized for assuming that employees always make rational decisions based on rewards and benefits. Critics argue that employee retention may also be influenced by emotional attachment, organizational culture, leadership style, and personal circumstances that are not fully explained by the theory (Redmond, 2015). Additionally, the theory may not adequately explain situations where employees remain in organizations despite dissatisfaction or limited organizational support. Nevertheless, the theory remains widely applicable in human resource management studies because it provides a strong explanation of how organizational support influences employee commitment and retention behavior.

Social exchange theory underpins staff retention in the current study by explaining how career development initiatives strengthen employee-employer relationships and encourage long-term commitment. When organizations invest in mentorship programs, professional training, promotion opportunities, and career progression structures, employees perceive such initiatives as evidence of organizational support and concern for their professional growth (Hussein & Othman, 2021). Consequently, employees are more likely to reciprocate through increased loyalty, reduced turnover intentions, and stronger commitment to the organization. Therefore, the theory was considered appropriate for explaining staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Empirical Review

Muthumbi and Kamau (2021) explored the purpose of professional development opportunities in workplace productivity in a leading consultancy firm in Kenya and discovered that positive relationships between systematic career development programs and other indicators of individual performance are strong. They have demonstrated that those employees who were enrolled in formal career development programs displayed measurably improved performance scales, including increased productivity levels, increased job satisfaction scores, and directness to organizational objectives. The research has presented the significance of career development programs as an effective motivational tool that not only assists in engaging the employees but also contributes to organizational performance.

Awino and Kipsang (2020) studied the role of incentive structures on the relationship between the planning of professional development and commitment among the workforce in diverse manufacturing organizations and came up with significant findings regarding the relationship between practices in such organizations as synergistic. Their empirical research revealed that the differences in engagement levels of employees in the companies that implemented wide-range reward systems and systematic career-planning programs were far higher than in the companies that implemented such strategies only. Analysis revealed that those employees who believe that their effort in career advancement has been valued and rewarded with concrete benefits would be more committed to the organizational objectives, and they would be more ready to invest in the employment relationship over the long term. These results indicate that a career development program could be much more efficient, and a proper recognition and reward system is a vicious circle that improves employee satisfaction and loyalty to the company.

The study by Ferdiana, Khan, and Ray (2023) is very informative in the context of the effect of professional development, job loyalty, and organizational support on employee retention rate in the workplace since it depicts how the three variables interact to influence the decision of employees to stay with an organization. The programs alone in their general analysis did not do much in terms of ensuring that the employees are retained but they must be combined with a solid organizational commitment and support systems to work. This study established that organizational support is a mediating factor that is important in deciding whether career development opportunities and the employee retention rate are related. Employee retention rates amongst the employees who had undergone thorough career development programs in the enabling organizational settings were quite high compared to the non-enabling organizations that did not have the right support networks, and, as such, the significance of a holistic approach in employee development strategies.

Hassan (2022) analyzed the context of workforce retention by the use of strategic HR interventions in the Maldivian setting, with specific attention on how compensation and reward systems are mediating factors in professional development initiatives. This study showed that a proper human resource management behaviour, such as a well-organised career development program, plays a key role in employee retention through the mediation of the right pay and reward systems. Retention rates of employees were found to be significantly higher in business establishments with clearly defined professional development opportunities and competitive remuneration packages, compared to those without detailed personnel growth programs. Hassan, in his work, says that in order to retain talented employees and reach peak success, especially in this competitive job market, since talented individuals have multiple options to choose from, career development programs must be incorporated with more comprehensive HRM practices.

Thwin, Janarthanan, and Bhaumik (2023) employed statistical analysis methods to determine the relationship between the two organizational variables and found that opportunities for professional progression result in workforce stability. The results of their research have determined that the rate of turnover of employees is significantly lower in organizations with established career advancement programs than in organizations that do not have such programs. The study established certain professional progression results that had the most significant impacts on retention decisions, such as promotion schemes, skills development schemes, mentorship schemes, and mapping career paths.

Munene (2019) examined the influence of employee-centered human resource practices on organizational performance in selected public universities in Kenya and established that staff development opportunities, institutional support systems, and inclusive workplace practices positively influenced employee commitment and workplace performance. The study further revealed that organizations that invested in employee growth and professional advancement experienced stronger employee attachment, improved morale, and lower turnover intentions. These findings support the argument that career development initiatives significantly contribute to staff retention within organizations.

Conceptual Framework

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between study variables. In this study, staff retention was the dependent variable while career development initiatives formed the predictor variable.

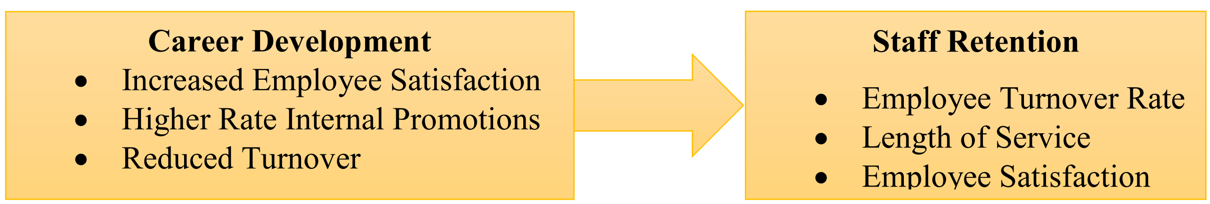

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Researcher (2026)

The independent variable in this study is career development initiatives, which are operationalized through increased employee satisfaction, higher rates of internal promotions, and reduced employee turnover, while staff retention is the dependent variable measured using employee turnover rate, length of service, and employee satisfaction. Career development initiatives enhance employee growth and organizational commitment by providing employees with opportunities for professional advancement, mentorship, promotion, and continuous learning. Increased employee satisfaction enables employees to feel valued, motivated, and supported within the organization, thereby strengthening their commitment and willingness to remain in the firm. Higher rates of internal promotions encourage employees by providing clear career progression pathways and growth opportunities, which improve morale and long-term organizational attachment. Reduced turnover reflects the effectiveness of career development initiatives in minimizing employee exits and enhancing workforce stability. When effectively implemented, career development initiatives contribute to improved staff retention by lowering employee turnover rates, increasing employees' length of service, and enhancing overall employee satisfaction. The conceptual framework therefore demonstrates how career development initiatives influence staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Susan McKenney and Thomas C. Reeves (2018), a research design serves as the overall framework that directs the systematic collection, analysis, and presentation of data. It also guides the researcher in identifying the type of data required and provides justification for the methods selected. This study adopted a descriptive research design because it is suitable for addressing questions relating to what, why, where, when, and how. According to Susan Loeb et al. (2017), a descriptive approach also enables the researcher to investigate the link between certain variables. Therefore, this methodology was deemed suitable for the current study, which aimed to determine how employee development techniques affected staff retention at particular Nairobi HR consultancy firms. This design has been adopted extensively by various relevant studies (Mashedi & Munene, 2025: Munene, 2019: Opot & Munene, 2023: Soita & Munene, 2024).

The study targeted human resource consultancy firms operating in Nairobi County, Kenya. The unit of analysis was the human resource consultancy firms, while the unit of observation comprised management employees drawn from different levels of management, including top management, middle management, and lower management. These employees are directly involved in employee development, career progression, and staff retention practices within their organizations, making them suitable respondents for providing relevant information regarding career development initiatives and staff retention. According to records from the Institute of Human Resource Management (IHRM, 2024), there are 34 registered HR consultancy firms in Nairobi County with a total of 257 management employees, who formed the target population for the study.

According to Kothari (2004), a sampling technique refers to the method used in selecting respondents from the target population for purposes of data collection. The study employed a two-stage sampling procedure consisting of proportionate stratified sampling and simple random sampling to ensure adequate representation of all categories within the target population. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level, a method widely regarded as reliable and effective in determining representative sample sizes from relatively homogeneous populations.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Whereby n =sample size; N = Targeted Population and e = error term.

$$N = \frac{257}{1 + 257\,(0.05)^{2}}$$

$$= \mathbf{157}$$

The sampling factor was calculated as follows;

Sampling factor (k) = Sample size/Target population

Hence;

K= 157/257

K= 0.610

Table 1: Sample Size

Management Level	Target Participant (N)	Sampling factor (k)	Sample size (n)
Top-level Management	34	0.61	21
Middle-level Management	81	0.61	49
Lower-level Management	142	0.61	87
Total	**257**		**157**

Source: Researcher (2026)

Table 3.2 presents the sample distribution across the three management levels using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation of all respondent categories. Using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 157 respondents was obtained from a target population of 257 management employees. A sampling factor of 0.61 was proportionately applied across all management levels to determine the number of respondents selected from each category. Consequently, top-level management contributed 21 respondents, middle-level management 49 respondents, and lower-level management 87 respondents. This sampling approach enhanced the representativeness, reliability, and accuracy of the study findings. Data from the sampled management employees were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions measured on a five-point Likert scale. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), structured questionnaires are suitable instruments for collecting standardized data in survey research because they enable systematic analysis and interpretation of the study phenomenon. In this study, the questionnaire focused on obtaining relevant information regarding career development initiatives and staff retention within human resource consultancy firms.

Validity refers to the degree to which a research instrument accurately measures the intended variables and captures the concept under study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Kothari, 2004). In this study, validity was ensured through face, content, and construct validity. Face validity involved reviewing the questionnaire to confirm that the items were clear, relevant, and appropriate for measuring career development initiatives and staff retention, with input from the supervisor and research experts. Content validity was achieved through an extensive review of related literature to ensure all key dimensions of the study variables were adequately covered. Construct validity was established by aligning questionnaire items with the study objectives and theoretical framework, ensuring that the instrument accurately reflected the intended concepts (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004).

Reliability of the research instrument was determined by examining its internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or higher was adopted as the threshold for acceptable reliability of the questionnaire, in line with the guidelines proposed by Sekaran and Bougie (2016). The data obtained from the pilot study were analyzed to generate reliability statistics, the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability Results

Constructs	No. of Test Items	Alpha Score	Deduction
Career Development	6	0.770	Acceptable

Source: Pilot Study Observations (2025)

The study construct recorded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming acceptable internal consistency and reliability of the research instrument. Specifically, career development initiatives attained an alpha coefficient of 0.770, indicating that the questionnaire items consistently measured the intended study construct. The findings therefore confirmed that the instrument was reliable and suitable for data collection in line with the objectives of the study.

According to Smith-Hall et al. (2018), data collection refers to the systematic process of gathering information for a specific research purpose. In this study, data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to selected management employees in human resource consultancy firms. After obtaining approval from Kenyatta University and a research permit from NACOSTI, the researcher sought authorization from the management of the selected firms to conduct the study without interfering with normal organizational operations. Informed consent was obtained from the respondents before administering the questionnaires, and adequate time was provided for completion. Follow-up procedures were also conducted to ensure timely return of the completed questionnaires for subsequent data analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize and describe the characteristics of the study variables. Inferential statistics were analyzed using regression analysis to establish the relationship between career development initiatives and staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya. The regression model applied in the study is presented in Equation (i).

$$Y=\beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon \text{……………………………………………………….. (i)}$$

Where:

Y = Career Development
X = Staff Retention
β_0, β_1= Beta Coefficients
ε = Error Term

For the inferential analysis, the study adopted a 95% confidence level as the basis for making statistical inferences relating to the study objectives. In addition, a significance level of 0.05 was used as the criterion for determining statistical significance and guiding the acceptance or rejection of the study hypotheses.

The rules of morality were observed so that the participants in the research were not harmed or inconvenient by the research. The researcher invited the respondents to give informed consent by first sending them an introductory letter and the study instrument. The introductory letter explained the aim of the study and assured participants that their identities would remain confidential. An authorization letter from the graduate school confirmed that the researcher was a student at Kenyatta University and that the study had received approval. This authorization was then used to obtain a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). All information collected during the study was securely stored and kept strictly confidential, and no details were shared or published without the respondents' consent.

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

This section presents the analysis and discussion of the response rate, together with the mean scores and standard deviations for outsourcing capability and organizational performance.

6.1 Response Rate

Out of the 257 questionnaires distributed, 156 were completed and returned by respondents, while 101 were not returned despite follow-up efforts. Table 1 presents the response rate distribution

Table 1: Response Rate Distribution

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Returned questionnaire	156	60.7
Unreturned questionnaire	101	39.3
Total	**257**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (2026)

The study achieved a response rate of 60.7% from the distributed questionnaires, while the non-response rate was 39.3%, as presented in Table 4.1. This response rate was considered adequate for data analysis and generalization of the study findings to the target population. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate above 50% is acceptable for social science research and provides a reliable basis for analysis and interpretation of results. Similarly, Babbie (2007) notes that an adequate response rate enhances representativeness and minimizes non-response bias. Therefore, the response achieved in this study was considered sufficient for drawing valid conclusions regarding career development initiatives and staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Descriptive Findings for Career Development

Career development initiatives, as the independent variable, were measured using indicators such as increased employee satisfaction, higher rates of internal promotions, and reduced employee turnover. Data collected on these key dimensions of career development initiatives were analyzed using the sample mean and standard deviation, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Career Development

Statements	n	Sample Mean	Std. Deviation
Increased Employee Satisfaction			
Employee development has assisted the advancement of employees' careers in the HR consulting industry.	156	3.72	0.64
Career advancement in HR consulting firms has boosted employee engagement and improved working relationships among employees.	156	3.97	0.61
Aggregate Scores for Employee Satisfaction		**3.85**	**0.86**
Higher Rate of Internal Promotions			
Career advancement and employee development have improved promotion opportunities within HR consulting firms in recent years.	156	4.10	0.80
Organizational performance has improved due to increased career advancement opportunities among employees in HR consulting firms.	156	4.20	0.80
Aggregate Scores for Higher Rate of Internal Promotions		**4.15**	**0.80**
Reduced Turnover			
There is a good working environment between employees and management due to continuous career advancement initiatives in HR consulting firms.	156	4.20	0.80
Career development initiatives have contributed to reduced employee turnover in HR consulting firms.	156	4.05	0.83
Aggregate Scores for Reduced Turnover		**4.13**	**0.82**
Overall Scores for Career Development Initiatives		**4.13**	**0.61**

Source: Research Data (2026)

Table 4.6 indicates that respondents generally agreed that career development initiatives positively influence staff retention in HR consulting firms, as shown by an overall mean score of 4.04 (SD = 0.83). Higher rates of internal promotions recorded the highest aggregate mean (M = 4.15, SD = 0.80), suggesting that employees highly value promotion opportunities and career growth within the organization. Reduced turnover also recorded a high mean score (M = 4.13, SD = 0.82), implying that continuous career advancement initiatives contribute to workforce stability and employee commitment. Increased employee satisfaction recorded a mean of 3.85 (SD = 0.86), indicating that career development initiatives moderately enhance employee satisfaction and engagement.

The findings support human capital theory, which emphasizes that investment in employee development enhances organizational commitment and retention (Fix, 2021). The results are also consistent with Muma et al. (2018), who established that career advancement opportunities reduce employee turnover intentions, and Hassen et al. (2023), who found that promotion opportunities strengthen employee commitment through perceived fairness and professional growth.

Inferential Analysis

Pearson's correlation analysis was first conducted to establish the strength and direction of the relationship between career development initiatives and staff retention. Thereafter, linear regression analysis was performed to examine the effect of career development initiatives on staff retention. In this case, staff retention was regressed against career development initiatives, and the findings are presented and discussed accordingly.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Career Advancement	1.000				
2. Employee Retention (Composite)	0.764	0.870	0.859	0.792	1.000

Source: Research Data (2026)

The correlation results presented in Table 4.10 indicate a strong positive relationship between career advancement and employee retention composite (r = 0.764). This implies that employees in human resource consultancy firms are more likely to remain in organizations that provide clear career growth and promotion opportunities. The findings suggest that career advancement enhances employee commitment, job satisfaction, and workforce stability, thereby improving staff retention within HR consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Career advancement was the least yet significant correlation with employee retention (r = 0.764), which supports the fact that visible career advancement opportunity and promotional ladder are also significant retention factors. This is in line with Thwin et al. (2023) who reported that limited promotion prospects are a strong indicator of turnover among early and middle-career professionals, and Muthumbi and Kamau (2021) who reported that internal promotion policies positively determine loyalty of employees in professional service firms. However, Shiri et al. (2023) observed that career development can create mobility in cases where the growth of competencies is not accompanied by proportional internal growth.

Table 6: Linear Regression Analysis

Model Summary					
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**	**Durbin-Watson**
1	.879a	.773	.766	.218	129.41
ANOVA					
Model	**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Regression	24.627	4	6.157	129.41	.000b
Residual	7.220	151	0.048		
Total	31.847	155			
Coefficients					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		**Standardized Coefficient**	**t**	**Sig.**
	β	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	0.082	0.109		0.751	0.454
Career Development	0.224	0.038	0.316	5.879	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Staff Retention					
b. Predictors: (Constant) career development					

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of career development initiatives on staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya. The model summary results indicated a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.879, implying a strong positive relationship between career development initiatives and staff retention. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.773, while the adjusted R^2 was 0.766, indicating that career development initiatives explain approximately 76.6% of the variation in staff retention, while the remaining 23.4% is explained by other factors not included in the model. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.41 indicated that the model was generally free from serious autocorrelation problems.

The ANOVA results revealed that the regression model was statistically significant, as shown by $F(4, 151) = 129.41$, $p = 0.000$, implying that the model significantly predicts staff retention at the 95% confidence level. This confirms that career development initiatives have a statistically significant influence on staff retention among human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County.

The coefficients result further established that career development initiatives have a positive and significant effect on staff retention ($\beta = 0.224$, $t = 5.879$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that a unit increase in career development initiatives leads to a corresponding improvement in staff retention. Therefore, enhancing career development practices such as training, mentorship, promotion opportunities, and structured career progression significantly improves employee retention in human resource consultancy firms.

Furthermore, the contribution of the independent variable was examined to determine its effect on staff retention and to assess how career development initiatives influenced the overall model fitness. The resulting regression model is presented in Equation (ii).

Staff Retention = 0.082 + 0.224 Career Development

As shown in Table 7, the four development strategies are all positively and significantly related to employee retention ($p < 0.001$). The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values range between 1.59 and 2.36, all below the threshold of 10, which rules out multicollinearity among the predictors. The constant coefficient ($B = 0.082$, $p = 0.454$) is not significant, implying that the regression model is not biased towards a constant, which is typical of models with highly correlated factors. Career advancement had the highest standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.316$, $t = 5.879$, $p < 0.001$), and is the strongest individual predictor of employee retention in this model. This suggests opportunities for advancement and career planning have the largest marginal effect on retention, all else held constant. This finding is consistent with Thwin et al. (2023) who suggest that career advancement opportunities are the main drivers of turnover intentions among young professionals, and with Muthumbi and Kamau (2021) who confirmed that promotion policies build loyalty and reduce HR costs. Career advancement's VIF of 1.59 also confirms that it is the variable with least multicollinearity with other predictors, and therefore has the most independent predictive effect. However, van der Heijden et al. (2018) caution that although high performers may leave if there is no internal mobility at the senior levels.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to examine the effect of career development initiatives on staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya. The findings established that career development initiatives have a positive and statistically significant influence on staff retention. The study therefore concludes that effective career development practices, particularly career advancement opportunities, play an important role in enhancing employee commitment, job satisfaction, and workforce stability, making career development a key predictor of staff retention in human resource consultancy firms.

Recommendation

HR consulting firms in Nairobi County should prioritize the institutionalization of career advancement systems by clearly defining merit-based and objective promotion policy, career paths and ongoing development dialogues between managers and employees. Ongoing and career-oriented training should be formalized and connected with advancement opportunities within the organization, ensuring that development activities are perceived as an essential component of career advancement rather than as a "perk" to be offered independently of career advancement structures.

Study Limitations and Areas for Future Research

This study examined the effect of career development initiatives on staff retention in human resource consultancy firms in Nairobi County, Kenya, with emphasis on career advancement opportunities. However, the study was limited to HR consultancy firms within Nairobi County, which may limit generalization of the findings to other sectors and geographical contexts. In addition, the study relied mainly on self-reported questionnaire data, which may have been affected by respondent bias. Staff retention may also be influenced by other factors not captured in the study, such as compensation, organizational culture, leadership style, work-life balance, and employee engagement. Future studies should therefore examine these additional variables to provide a broader understanding of employee retention in knowledge-intensive organizations. Further research may also adopt qualitative approaches such as interviews and focus group discussions, as well as longitudinal research designs, to generate deeper insights and establish whether the influence of career development initiatives on staff retention remains consistent over time. Comparative studies across different sectors and counties in Kenya may also be conducted to enhance generalizability of findings.

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