



# **CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN KENYA FORESTRY RESEARCH INSTITUTE HEADQUARTER IN MUGUGA, KIAMBU COUNTY**

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## **Abstract**

*Employee performance at Kenya Forestry Research Institute has been found to be poor, with more than one third of organization's employees failing to meet deadlines, regarding accomplishing their tasks or organizational targets. This study sought to investigate the effects of career development practices on employee performance in Kenya Forestry Research Institute in Muguga, Kenya. The study was anchored Equity theory. The study used a positivism philosophy and a descriptive research design. The unit of analysis was Kenya Forestry Research Institute. The target population was all the 178 staff working in Kenya Forestry Research Institute in Muguga. A sample of 121 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling. A semi-structured questionnaire was used in collecting primary data. A pilot study was conducted to ensure the data collection tool is reliable. Analysis of qualitative data was carried out through thematic analysis. Descriptive statistics focused on frequency distribution, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Components of Inferential statistics*



*include; Pearson correlation coefficient and multivariate regression analysis. The data was analyzed by the help of SPSS Version 25. The results obtained were presented both in tables as well as figures (pie charts and bar graphs). The study found that career development practices have significant effect on employee performance in Kenya Forestry Research Institute. The study also found that through career development, the employees are able to improve their skills. Henceforth, the study recommends that Kenya Forest Research Institute Headquarter should build trust, find mentors and encourage staff to continuously acquire new knowledge so as to enhance competency skills of its staff.*

*Keywords: Career Development, Employee Performance, Skills Development, Advancement, Equal Opportunities*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Performance of staff at KEFRI has been found to be poor, with more than one third of the staff failing to meet task deadlines and institutional targets. Globally, rewarding in organizations is given priority to ensure good performance of employees. Companies rewarding their employees make them feel more valued hence encouraging them to put more effort in their work because they know that their well-being, self-development and career development are taken care of by their employers (Korir & Kipkebut, 2016). In both the production and service sectors employees are considered to be the engines of their organizations while rewards act as their fuel. It is impossible for any organization to achieve its objectives or even operate without employees. According to Dahie and Mohamed (2017), organization's growth and goal achievement is determined by the level of willingness of staff to exploit their know-how, creativity and abilities in favor of their organization. Therefore, it is an obligation to the organization to ensure motivation of these able employees through rewarding (Erbasi & Arat, 2012). One of the strategies of motivating staff in an organization is career development.

In the United States, Allen and Helms (2014) indicate that career development was linked to greater perceived organizational performance. Saud, Tulus, Asri, Riani, Sri and Mugi (2017) noted that career development is dependent on organization ability to provide perceived organizational support and affects overall performance. In Nigeria, Nnaji-Ihedinmah (2015) indicated that career development practices play a key role in employee motivation. In Tanzania, Kikoito (2014) highlights that non-financial rewards positively affect commercial banks' performance. In Kenya, Chelangat and Gachunga (2016) indicated that career development practices influence organizational commitment.

The necessities of organization workers can be improved via training as well as development. This is normally achieved when the given information is useful, desirable and applicable (Dialoke & Nkechi, 2017). The main factors leading to employees' retention development of skills include training, scholarships as well as seminars and workshops. Training enhances the urge of employees to stay in an organization for a prolonged period of time. Training of professional and creation of carrier programs must be the most important aspect of organization policies (Kakui & Gachunga, 2016). Dahie and Mohamed (2017) indicate that career development encompasses development of skills, setting equal opportunities and advancing opportunities among staff.

### **Statement of Problem**

Employee performance is an essential facet of modern day human resources management. Employers adopt strategic human resource practices to continuously enhance their employee performance. KEFRI has adopted various strategic human resource practices as highlighted in human resources procedures manual (Kenya Forestry Research Institute, 2017). The manual guides the organization in the execution of career development programmes. Nonetheless, employee performance problems have persisted in KEFRI. It is characterized by low productivity and innovation as well as failure to meet deadlines in 55 per cent of the jobs (Gitamo, Koyier & Wachira 2017). Gitamo, Koyier and Wachira (2016) indicated that 84 per cent of the employees in KEFRI were not conversant with training programmes as reward programmes which the institution offered. It is thus crucial to understand ways in which different career development practices affect employee performance.

Dialoke and Nkechi (2017) researched on career development and productivity of subordinate staff at Michael Okpara University in Nigeria; and Kurniawan, Rivai and Suharto (2018) centered their study on the effect of career development on staff performance in Indonesia. Due to variation in macroeconomic environment as well as legal framework, the results from other studies cannot however be applied to institutions in Kenya.

In Kenya, Kakui and Gachunga (2016) investigated on how career development affects staff performance at the National Cereal Board in Kenya; Mark and Nzulwa (2018) investigated on how career development programmes on staff performance at NHIF Kenya; and Oduma and Were (2014) determined the effect of career development on staff performance among public universities in Kenya. However, different organizations are characterized by different policies governing, organizational structures and human resources needs and hence findings from one institution cannot be generalized to other institutions. There were still glaring gaps in literature as the previous studies had not addressed the issues that the current study intends to

investigate. The research therefore aimed to investigate impact of career development practices on employees' performance in Kenya Forestry Research Institute.

Null hypothesis that was tested during the research was as follows:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Career development practices have no significant effect on employee performance in Kenya Forestry Research Institute Headquarter in Muguga.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Review**

The study will be anchored on reinforcement and expectancy theory. Skinner (1938) developed the reinforcement and expectancy theory. This theory postulates that the behavior of an individual depends on consequences of their actions. According to its developer, the techniques of controlling staff behavior are extinction, punishment and positive and negative reinforcement (Chris, Berger, Cummings & Heneman, 2017).

Positive reinforcement is based on individual behavior. Reward being one of the positive reinforcement stimulates occurrence of a particular behavior. Otherwise, negative reinforcement entails rewarding staff through elimination of undesirable thoughts or ideas. Punishment entails elimination of consequences with an aim of preventing repetition of undesirable behavior in the future. Extinction depicts organizational failure to reinforce desirable outcomes through elimination of rewarding practices (Surlin & Gordon, 2018). This implies that in case organizational staff are not appreciated for job well done, they may think their effort is worthless or their behavior is fruitless consequently resulting to decline in their overall work morale. Extinction explains the decline in staff morale due to negative perception about their contribution to the organization (Seward, 2019).

In relation to this study, reinforcement theory explains the effect of development of career on staff performance at KEFRI. The theory highlights on how an individual learns behavior through career development. The organization can also encourage positive employee behavior through skill development opportunities, advancement opportunities and provision of equal opportunities for advancement. Henceforth, positive reinforcement can motivate staff to improve their work attitude as desirable traits become habitual activities that consequently result to improvement in their performance (Renee, 2018).

### **Empirical Literature Review**

Dialoke and Nkechi (2017) researched on career development and productivity of subordinate staff at Michael Okpara University in Nigeria. This study used descriptive research

approach. The researchers employed simple random sampling in their study. Findings showed that career development positively influences performance of subordinate staff. The results further indicated that career development practices among the subordinate staff led to their work motivation. Further, the study established that career development prevent job burnout among the subordinate staff thus leading to entire improvement in administrative performance of that university.

Kakui and Gachunga (2016) investigated on how career development affects staff performance at the National Cereal Board in Kenya. Moreover, researchers adopted descriptive research approach. The survey found that career development significant affects staff performance. Results also showed that career development regarding counseling and provision of learning materials helped the staff to develop critical thinking when solving a particular problem. The study also established that training significantly affects staff performance. Further, the results revealed that career development improved on staff' competency skills and job morale. Furthermore, the study found that career development created good relationship among the staff.

Mark and Nzulwa (2018) investigated on how career development programmes on staff performance at NHIF Kenya. The study used descriptive research method and showed that career development programmes significantly affects performance of NHIF staff. Moreover, the study established that training positively affects staff performance. Moreover, the results revealed that career counseling negatively affect staff performance. Further, the study established that employee mentoring has significant effect on staff performance.

Mbuthia (2016) centered their study on the effect of career development on staff performance in Indonesia. The researcher employed exploratory research design. Simple random sampling was adopted during the research. Findings revealed that the relationship between career development, motivation and employee performance is significant. Partially variable Career development, motivation and organizational commitment affect the performance of employees. While motivation variable is not proven can be intervening variable in relationship of career development variable to employee performance. And organizational commitment variable is not proven can be intervening variable in relation of job pressure variable to employee performance.

Ojeleye (2017) determined the effect of career development on staff performance among public universities in Kenya. The researchers employed descriptive survey design. The research established that career development significantly affects staff performance. Results also revealed that training significantly influences staff performance. Moreover, the results revealed that staff orientation lead to team work and improvement in overall staff performance. The study

also found that mentorship enabled the staff to improve in their career growth as they were introduced to other professions related to their careers.

### Conceptual Framework

This study aimed at revealing impacts of reward management practices on performance of employees of Kenya Forestry Research Institute. Figure 1 shows the relationship between dependent variable and independent variables. The independent variable was career development. Dependent variable was employee performance in Kenya Forestry Research Institute.

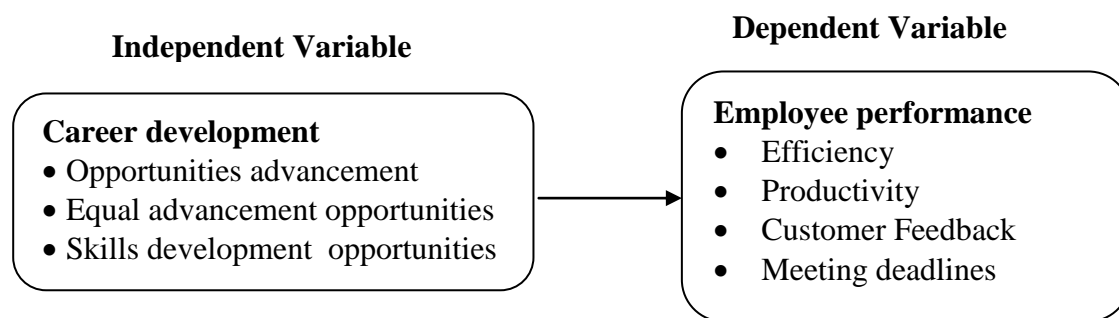


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a positivism philosophy and explanatory research design. The reason why explanatory research design is preferred in this study is because the research objective sought to examine effect of career development on employee performance in Kenya Forestry Research Institute. The unit of analysis of this research was KEFRI headquarters while the unit of observation of this survey was all the 178 staff working in enterprise, forest product and development, finance and administration, human resource, corporate affairs & quality assurance, technical support services, supply chain management, finance and administration departments in KEFRI headquarters.

The study's sample size was calculated by deploying Krejcie and Morgan formula for sampling (Russell, 2013). Using this formula a representative sample was provided. The formula used for these calculations is;

$$n = \frac{x^2 NP(1 - P)}{(ME^2(N - 1)) + (x^2 P(1 - P))}$$

Where:

n=sample size

$x^2$ =Chi-square for specified level of Confidence at 1 degree of freedom

N= size of the Population

P = is the fraction of study population with desirable characteristics.

If unknown 50% is used, Collis and Hussey (2014) indicate that the use of 50 per cent provides the maximum sample size and hence it is the most preferable.

ME=Error margin

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 178 * 0.5 * 0.5}{(0.05^2 * 177) + (1.96^2 * 0.5 * 0.5)}$$

$$n = 121$$

The 121 staff were chosen with the help of stratified random sampling technique. The strata comprised of enterprise, forest product and development, finance and administration, human resource, corporate affairs and quality assurance, technical support services and supply chain management departments.

Table 1: Sample Size

Departments	Target population	Sample Size
Enterprise department	34	23
Forest product and development,	28	19
Finance and administration	28	19
Human resource	27	18
Corporate affairs & quality assurance	24	16
Technical support services	22	15
Supply chain management	15	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>121</b>

The researcher employed semi-structured questionnaire to collect primary data. The structured questions were useful as they enabled easy analysis of data and reduced the time and money needed for data collection. The unstructured questionnaires helped the researcher get in-depth responses from the respondents as they gave a chance to the respondents to give detailed information. The pilot study sample comprised of 12 staff from KEFRI national office located at Karura, representing 10% of the sample size to assess the validity and reliability of the research instrument.

Both open ended and closed ended questions were used to collect qualitative as well as quantitative data respectively. Qualitative data was further analyzed through thematic analysis and results presented in prose form. Analysis of quantitative data was based on descriptive statistics and inferential statistic through the assistance of SPSS version 25. Components of descriptive statistics were; mean, frequency, percentage and standard deviation. Inferential

statistics include; multivariate regression analysis and Pearson correlation coefficients. The researcher conducted diagnostic tests before inferential statistics. The regression model was as shown below;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Whereby; Y = Employee performance;  $\beta_0$  = Constant;  $\beta_1$  = Coefficients of determination for Career development practices;  $X_1$  = Career development practices;  $\varepsilon$  = Error term

The researcher considered ethical issues to facilitate the reputation of the study. Firstly, the researcher recognized the information adopted from different academicians and scholars so as to combat plagiarism. Secondly, the questionnaires were administered to participants who volunteered to participate in this study and individuals who were not willing were not forced. Thirdly, the respondents were not allowed to write the names in the questionnaire for the sake of anonymity. Confidentiality of respondents' information was guaranteed by ensuring that only individuals who are authorized access the information. Lastly, the researcher made an application of research permit from NACOSTI and the University as well as KEFRI.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The current research sample size was 121. The researcher administered 121 questionnaires among the staff working in enterprise, forest product and development, finance and administration, human resource, corporate affairs and quality assurance, technical support services, supply chain management, finance and administration departments in KEFRI headquarters. Out of the total, 106 questionnaires were filled and finally returned to the researcher on time. Henceforth, response rate of the research was 87.60%. According to Kothari (2009), a response rate of 75% and above is considered reliable. Therefore, the response rate (87.60%) was within the acceptable limit.

Table 2: Response Rate

Departments	Sample Size	Responses	Response Rate
Enterprise department	23	19	82.61
Forest product and development,	19	17	89.47
Finance and administration	19	18	94.74
Human resource	18	16	88.89
Corporate affairs & quality assurance	16	14	87.50
Technical support services	15	13	86.67
Supply chain management	10	9	90.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>87.60</b>



### Career Development Practices

The staff were requested to indicate their level of agreement on the impact of different aspects of career development practices on employee performance in Kenya Forestry Research Institute. Results obtained were shown in Table 3. The staff working in KEFRI headquarters agreed that the organization provide fully funded scholarship opportunities to its staff as indicated by mean of 3.990 (Std. dv = 0.402). Furthermore, they also agreed that employees are able to improve their skills as indicated by mean of 3.981 (Std. dv = 0.364). They also agreed that KEFRI gives equal opportunities for career development as indicated by a mean of 3.981 (Std. dv = 0.497). Furthermore, respondents agreed, scholarship package comes with training allowances as indicated by a mean of 3.934 (Std. dv = 0.442). Findings concur with discoveries of Dialoke and Nkechi (2017) that career development practices focus on provision of equal opportunity for scholarship and training allowances. Besides that, they agreed that there is no discrimination in career development opportunities as indicated by a mean of 3.934 (Std. dv = 0.463).

Moreover, respondents agreed that institution provides partially paid scholarship to employees who want to further their studies as indicated by mean of 3.896 (Std. dv = 0.456). Moreover, participants agreed that institution offers all the employees career advancement opportunities as indicated by mean of 3.603 (Std. dv = 0.580). Nonetheless, respondents disagreed that all staff at KEFRI are entitled to career development programmes as indicated by a mean of 2.169 (Std. dv = 0.467). Findings concur with discoveries of Kakui and Gachunga (2016) that opportunities advancement, equal advancement opportunities and skills development opportunities have significant effect on employee performance.

Table 1: Effect of Various Aspects of Career Development Practices

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation
All staff at KEFRI are entitled to career development programmes	0.0	86.8	9.4	3.8	0.0	2.169	.467
With career development, the employees are able to improve their skills	0.0	0.0	7.5	86.8	5.7	3.981	.364
The institution offers all the employees career advancement opportunities	0.0	0.9	41.5	53.8	3.8	3.603	.580
The institution provides partially paid scholarship to employees who want to further their studies	0.0	2.8	7.5	86.8	2.8	3.896	.456

The organization provide fully funded scholarship opportunities to its staff	0.0	1.9	2.8	89.6	5.7	3.990	.402	Table 3...
Scholarship package comes with training allowances	0.0	2.8	4.7	88.7	3.8	3.934	.442	
KEFRI gives equal opportunities for career development	0.0	2.8	4.7	84.0	8.5	3.981	.497	
There is no discrimination in career development opportunities	0.0	1.9	8.5	84.0	5.7	3.934	.463	

The staff working in enterprise, forest product and development, finance and administration, human resource, corporate affairs and quality assurance, technical support services, supply chain management, finance and administration departments in KEFRI headquarters were asked to specify how else career development practices affect employee performance. According to their views, they specified that career development practices result to attraction of very talented workforce, help the organization to maintain its production and workforce through succession planning and enable staff to focus on gaps between the current abilities and those they are supposed to acquire in order to success, minimize staff burnout through provision of increased promotional avenues and minimize disputes related to promotional matters. These findings are in agreement with Dialoke and Nkechi (2017) findings that career development practices among the subordinate staff led to their work motivation. In addition, they argued that career development prevent job burnout among the subordinate staff thus leading to entire improvement in administrative performance.

### Employee Performance

The dependent variable of this study was employee performance. The staff were requested to indicate their agreement level on various statements relating of employee performance at Kenya Forest Research Institute. Results acquired were shown in Table 4. The staff agreed that breaking KEFRI top level objectives into smaller concrete targets enables employees to meet work deadlines as indicated by a mean of 4.000 (Std. dv = 0.338). Participants also agreed that employees make best possible use of institutional resources as indicated with a mean of 3.962 (Std. dv = 0.476). Moreover, participants agreed that institution gives employees a clear sense of what they should be aiming for as indicated with a mean of 3.934 (Std. dv = 0.442). Further, participants agreed that employees at KEFRI always meet work deadlines as indicated with mean of 3.801 (Std. dv = 0.682). Besides that, respondents agreed employees work towards meeting the set objectives as indicated with a mean of 3.669 (Std. dv = 0.672). Results are in agreement with discoveries of Pawirosumarto *et al.* (2017) that

setting of realistic goals; meeting work deadline and dedication towards meeting the set goals affect institutional performance.

With a mean of 3.650 (Std. dv = 0.816), respondents agreed that employees complete their work within the stipulated timeframe. They also agreed that staff at KEFRI are kind when attending to customers as indicated with a mean of 3.641 (Std. dv = 0.604). Moreover, participants agreed that employees at KEFRI carry out error free task as indicated with a mean of 3.575 (Std. dv = 0.646). By a mean of 3.528 (Std. dv = 0.664), participants agreed that operation cost at KEFRI is low. However, they moderately agreed that employees respond to customers on time when asked to do so as indicated with a mean of 3.377 (Std. dv = 0.821). Staff moderately agreed that they use amicable procedures to resolve conflict as indicated with a mean of 3.339 (Std. dv = 0.599). Additionally, they moderately agreed that employees at KEFRI set realistic timelines as indicated with a mean of 3.217 (Std. dv = 0.552). The results conform to findings of Goggin and Rankin (2015) that efficiency, productivity, customer feedback and meeting deadlines are used to measure employee performance.

Table 4: Employee Performance at KEFRI

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employees complete their work within the stipulated timeframe	3.8	5.7	17.0	68.9	4.7	3.650	.816
Operation cost at KEFRI is low	0.0	6.6	36.8	53.8	2.8	3.528	.664
Employees make best possible use of institutional resources	0.0	2.8	4.7	85.8	6.6	3.962	.476
Employees at KEFRI always meet work deadlines	1.9	4.7	9.4	79.2	4.7	3.801	.682
Employees work towards meeting the set objectives	0.0	3.8	33.0	55.7	7.5	3.669	.672
Employees at KEFRI carry out error free task	0.0	3.8	39.6	51.9	4.7	3.575	.646
Employees respond to customers on time when asked to do so	3.8	6.6	41.5	44.3	3.8	3.377	.821
staff at KEFRI are kind when attending to customers	0.0	0.0	42.5	50.9	6.6	3.641	.604
Employees use amicable procedures to resolve conflict	0.0	1.9	67.0	26.4	4.7	3.339	.599
Employees at KEFRI set realistic deadlines	0.0	2.8	76.4	17.0	3.8	3.217	.552
The institution gives employees a clear sense of what they should be aiming for.	0.0	2.8	4.7	88.7	3.8	3.934	.442
Breaking KEFRI top level objectives into smaller concrete targets enables employees to meet work deadlines	0.0	0.0	5.7	88.7	5.7	4.000	.338

## Inferential Statistics

The researcher used inferential statistics (Pearson correlation analysis and regression analysis) to determine the association between dependent variable (employee performance at KEFRI) as well as independent variable (career development practices). However, the researcher conducted diagnostic test before conducting the inferential statistics.

## Correlation Analysis

The current study deployed Pearson correlation analysis to examine the strength of the association between the variables viz. employee performance at KEFRI and career development practices. The results in table 5 show that there was a strong relationship between career development practices and employee performance in KEFRI ( $r=0.947$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.000$ ). Since the career development practices had the highest correlation coefficient of 0.947, the relationship between career development practices and employee performance in KEFRI was considered the strongest. This correlation was considered significant as  $p$  value 0.000 was below 0.05 (significant level). Findings conform to the findings of Dialoke and Nkechi (2017) that there is a very strong association between career development practices and staff performance.

Table 5: Correlations Coefficients

		Employee performance	Career development practices
Employee performance	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	106	
Career development practices	Pearson Correlation	.947**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	106	106

## Regression Analysis

Multivariate regression analysis was used in the current study to determine the association between dependent variable (employee performance at KEFRI) and independent variables (career development practices). R-squared was employed in the current study to show the variation in dependent variable (employee performance at KEFRI) that could be explained by independent variable (career development practices). The R square was 0.2735. This implied that 27.35% of the variation in employee performance at KEFRI could be described by independent variable (career development practices).

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.523	0.2735	0.2657	0.15146

As shown in Table 6, F- calculated was 243.192 and F- critical was 3.9201. The p value was 0.000. Since F- calculated (243.192) was greater than F critical (3.9201) and the p value 0.000 was less than the significant level (0.05), the model was considered as a good fit for the data. Therefore, it could be used to predict the effect of career development practices on employee performance at KEFRI.

Table 7: Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	28.802	1	28.802	243.192	0.000
Residual	12.317	104	0.11843		
Total	41.119	105			

The regression model was as follow:

$$Y = 0.999 + 0.723X_2 + \varepsilon$$

The results also show that career development practices have significant effect on employee performance in KEFRI ( $\beta_2=0.723$ , p value= 0.001). This implies that an improvement in career development practices would lead to a 0.723 improvement in employee performance in KEFRI. The association was regarded significant since p value 0.001 was below significant level of 0.05). This means, improvement in career development practices enhances employee performance in KEFRI. The findings conform with the Harunavamwe and Kanengoni (2013) findings that career development practices have significant effect on employee performance.

Table 8: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
	1 (Constant)	0.999	0.163		
Career development practices	0.723	0.166	0.717	4.355	0.001

a. Dependent Variable: Employee performance

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of career development practices on employee performance in Kenya Forestry Research Institute Headquarter in Muguga. The study concludes that career development practices have significant effect on employee performance in Kenya Forestry Research Institute Headquarter in Muguga. The study found that through career development, the employees are able to improve their skills. In addition, the study found that opportunities advancement, equal advancement opportunities and skills development opportunities have significant effect on employee performance in KEFRI.

The study also found that through career development, the employees are able to improve their skills. Henceforth, the study recommends that Kenya Forest Research Institute Headquarter should build trust, find mentors and encourage staff to continuously acquire new knowledge so as to enhance competency skills of its staff.

With career development, the employees are able to improve their skills, but not all employees in KEFRI were entitled to career development programmes. The study recommends that the management of KEFRI should ensure that all employees are entitled to and can access career development programmes. In addition, the organization should continue offering fully funded scholarship opportunities as a way of improving employee skills and performance.

### Recommendation for Further Studies

The general objective of this study was to investigate effect of career development practices on employee performance in Kenya Forestry Research Institute Headquarter in Muguga. Nonetheless, this study was only limited to one institution. Hence, the study recommends that further studies ought to be performed on effect of career development practices on employee performance in other government institutions. The study also found that 27.35% of the variation in employee performance at KEFRI could be well explained by career development practices. Therefore, this study recommends further studies ought to be carried out to account for other factors affecting employee performance.

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