



Demystifying workplace emerging trends in the Kenyan public service: Perceptions from Kibabii University

Samuel Kairigo Wakahia^{1*}

Ernest Sangai Mohochi²

¹Library Department, Kibabii University, Bungoma, Kenya.

Email: swakahia@kibu.ac.ke

²Department of Kiswahili and other African Languages, Kibabii University, Bungoma, Kenya.

Email: mohochies@kibu.ac.ke

Abstract

This study explored public service employees' awareness and adoption of emerging trends in task performance within the Kenyan public service. A descriptive, cross-sectional survey was conducted with 50 staff responding to an online questionnaire. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Findings showed that 96% of respondents recognized "remote working" as the most familiar trend, followed by "hybrid working" and "Artificial Intelligence" at 88%. "Micro Learning" (66%) and the "gig economy" (56%) had lower recognition. Despite this, 72% confirmed the integration of "remote working" and "Artificial Intelligence" into service delivery, with "hybrid working" and "Micro Learning" also gaining traction. "Gig economy" adoption remained minimal, while "hybrid working" was the most widely implemented (62%). Thematic analysis identified four key effects of trend integration: Efficiency and Productivity, Flexibility and Work-Life Balance, Inclusion and Diversity, and Challenges and Concerns. The study concluded that while awareness and adoption of emerging trends are significant, challenges such as infrastructure, training, policy reforms, and organizational adaptability persist. Future research could explore employee attitudes toward job security amid these transitions.

Keywords:

Emerging trends
Performance management
Public service
Task performance.

Copyright:

© 2025 by the authors. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Publisher:

Scientific Publishing Institute

Received: 14 January 2025

Revised: 19 February 2025

Accepted: 15 May 2025

Published: 17 June 2025

(^{*} Corresponding Author)

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The Ethical Committee of the Kibabii University, Kenya has granted approval for this study on 25 February 2025 (Ref. No. KIBU/PPRI/CORR.03/VOL.2-2023).

Transparency: The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: Both authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

1. Introduction

The Civil Service in Kenya has undergone several changes since independence. These have ranged from the Kenyanization project of the post-independence days, to the Civil Service Reform Program of the early

1990s and the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation of the National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC) Government led by the late President Kibaki between 2002-2007. All these reforms were geared towards streamlining the civil service; optimizing staffing and improving remuneration with the end goal of boosting service delivery and growing the economy (Hope, Thomas, & Vyas, 2013). The expectation therefore is that the public service would have been streamlined in terms of optimal staffing, attractive working conditions, adoption of newly emerging trends, hence enhanced service delivery. In spite of these initiatives, the Kenyan civil service still grapples with challenges of lack of talent management policies, poor working conditions, low levels of productivity and performance, inadequate training opportunities and poor career advancement (Muthini, 2019; SRC, 2023).

Public sector performance and service delivery quality globally is directly linked with motivation, putting in place pleasant and favorable working conditions and adopting strategies that support career advancement for staff. Research has revealed that career progression, improved working environment and performance in institutions and organizations have a correlation (Kiiru, 2019; Zhenjing, Chupradit, Ku, Nassani, & Haffar, 2022). Therefore, for any organization to realize holistic growth, there is need to provide a transparent framework on what staff should be engaged in for them to grow their careers, endeavor to improve the working conditions of the employees and also adopt any strategies or emerging trends that will reduce experiential workplace challenges. Career advancement can be conceptualized as all engagements geared towards the improvement of individuals' integrity and exceptionality, talent building, development of organizational human resources so as to enhance their employability chances, improving the quality of workers' life so as to contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations (Abga & Bello, 2023). Lack of job satisfaction among employees, cases of low morale and lack of a sense of belonging to the organization may be attributed to issues of poor pay, lack of promotions, strict supervision, unfavorable working conditions, and lack of job security (Wangechi, Anne, & Kiragu, 2018). Career advancement therefore enhances the levels of satisfaction of such employees in that they now feel valuable in the organizations they work for and also in the presence of their supervisors (Mugaa, Guyo, & Otieno, 2018).

Another glaring issue in many Kenyan Public service institutions is that despite the many public service reforms adoption of transparency is not always given prominence within career progression models. Plenty of staff in most cases simply have no awareness of what types of knowledge, skills and experiences will effectively prepare them for the next step or the multiple sets of steps required to eventually get them to an ultimate career achievement (Hedge & Rineer, 2017). Another issue is that, not all employees within the same institutions are entitled or have access to career development and advancement programs (Veronica, Felistus, & Hannah, 2021). Career progression planning should never be looked at as a sole responsibility of the workers. The issue of career progression and all its intricacies should be approached from two diverging perspectives, i.e. from the perspective of an individual worker and from the view of the organization (Peplińska, Lipowski, & Niecarz, 2011). In a globe where organizations are finding it difficult to attract and retain their own employees, job progression becomes paramount and it necessitates collaboration, which majorly should be between the organization and their employees (Obunga, Were, & Muchelule, 2024).

Organizations have a crucial role to play when it comes to staff career advancement. The organizations that pay attention to career growth and progress needs of the staff enhance the productivity from their workforce since the workforce is properly trained, skilled, talented and motivated. Any Top Manager aware of this therefore seeks to navigate the organization in that direction as a strategy to enhance the organization's competitive advantage (Gyansah & Guantai, 2018). Such Top Managers pay attention to career development planning, therefore stand a high chance to reap high productivity from a properly trained, skilled, and talented workforce, therefore, the manager will steer his/her organization to places and enhance competitive advantage (Gyansah & Guantai, 2018).

Institutions with seamless Human Resource practices ensure that their staff are well motivated and that they are assured of upskilling opportunities and facilitation of appropriate trainings, especially micro learning opportunities done within the place of work, which eventually spur career progression (Igbokwe-Ibeto, Ewuim, & Agbodike, 2015; Santos, Armanu, Setiawan, & Rofiq, 2020). Such institutions and organizations approach the issue of career progression in partnership with their employees in the sense that they understand that it would be an ideal approach to have both parties benefitting (Hedge & Rineer, 2017).

The challenge of lack of knowledge, skills and expertise often leads to poor performance, diminished productivity and limited-service delivery within institutions, lack of expansion and an eventual diminishing employee self-development drive for career progression (Abga & Bello, 2023). At a time when modern technology such as Artificial Intelligence and virtual reality is fused in office roles, reskilling and upskilling therefore become paramount.

The same institutions must adopt current trends into thresholds for measuring productivity, hence influencing career progression. Such trends include remote working, hybrid working, augmented and virtual reality, increased job mobility where employees' productivity levels doesn't necessarily have to be gauged on the number of hours they spend seated in the office space, employee engagement where the employee is seen as a collaborator with the employer in aspects pertaining to job progression and Micro learning.

In view of the foregoing, this paper seeks to address three research questions: Firstly, whether staff have an understanding of the emerging trends aligned to task performance practices in the Kenyan Public service, secondly, whether these emerging trends have been fused into task performance practices in the Kenyan Public service and thirdly, what effect the Emerging Trends have on Public Service Delivery. The research uses Kibabii University, a public university in Kenya, as a case study with the aim of contributing towards a strategy for fusing emerging trends into task performance practices in the Kenyan public service.

2. Literature Review

Orishede (2022) in his research on how the organizational culture impacts career progression in the public service established that organizational culture has an impact on career progression. He opines that the impact is imminent depending on the cultural practices that are associated with such an organization. His findings further revealed that indeed there are discriminatory practices during recruitment within organizations which hinder career progression. Orishede (2022) recommends that Management of any organization must distinguish and underscore the need for employee career progression as a constituent to the success of the organization. A further recommendation is that Management therefore must build an organizational culture that motivates employees into having an entrepreneurial mindset and to give their best in all they do as part of attaining career progression.

According to Hedge and Rineer (2017) in their research on improving task performance and career development, career development structures enable organizations and their staff to determine the suitable career pathways and eventually navigate them together. Hedge and Rineer through their employer-focused model of career development, further underscore the need for organizations to increase transparency at processes involved in shaping of employee career trajectories as this enhances indiscriminate access to opportunities for all employees across board by leveling the playing field for them all across their demographic spectrum.

Wawira, Mathews, Machogu, and Wanjala (2017) sought to establish the effects of career stagnation on public service performance. From the findings in their research, all employees join an organization with an expectation of attaining career growth until the time of retirement. They further reveal that the reasons for career stagnation in organizations include lack of a streamlined structure and therefore employees cannot be promoted since some positions do not exist in new establishments. Wawira et al. (2017) offer that another contributing factor is failure from the management to encourage employees to utilize available opportunities for their career advancement. The study therefore recommends that Management should motivate their staff as lack of motivation leads to career stagnation while motivation enhance career advancement among employees. This may be achieved through the provision of career advancement talks, creation of a motivational climate where the management is approachable and that it embraces participative decision making from the staff, introduces various non-monetary and monetary rewards, and provides career development talks.

Kirai (2013) studied the barriers that Kenyan women who are in the public service encounter when it comes to career progression. Kirai sought to examine if organizational structures are a hinderance to career growth and advancement on women. The research established that some recruitment procedures are gender blind and that, according to the researcher makes them prejudicial. The research also revealed that most trainings on offer lack a gender dimension and therefore most women who make it up the career ladder have to go all the way unaided in a male dominated and thought oriented public service. Kirai recommends that the Kenyan public service ought to provide and encourage an environment that allows women to build and realize their full potential.

Mwangi and Gachunga (2016) assessed the influence of career development on service delivery in the public sector. The research established that career development has a positive impact on service delivery. The research further revealed that a large number of public service institutions have no clear employee retention plan which significantly affects service delivery. Additional findings of the study further indicate that management hardly recognize the employees after attainment of added qualifications which discourages other employees from pursuing and attaining added qualification. Mwangi and Gachunga recommended that ministries and public service institutions should activate retention plans for staff, in order to realize an improvement in service delivery. The study further recommended that staff need to be encouraged to undertake more trainings in professional courses as ministries prioritize and lay emphasis of promotion-based courses as has been provided for in various schemes of service as a strategy that inspires career advancement.

Atendo, Getande, and Otengah (2022) investigated the influence of the Teachers Service Commission's career progression on teachers' performance in Kenya. Results revealed that career progression has a low positive influence on the task performance of teachers. Organizations therefore ought to put in place strategies that can motivate teacher so as to retain them in service. The research further established that teachers in Kenya have lost the urge for workplace promotion as a result of poorly elaborated procedures aligned to available workplace opportunities and promotion, hence they no longer attach value or pursue promotion at their work places. The research also revealed that in as much as principals, school heads and the teachers themselves acknowledged the importance of career growth as a strategy to enhance performance, there was no

significant influence between Teachers Service Commission career advancement prospects and teacher performance in Public Secondary Schools. [Atendo et al. \(2022\)](#) recommended that the TSC ought to develop criteria for recruitment and promotion to be used for promoting the teachers who have undergone training enhancement skills relevant to their specialization.

The reviewed literature is useful in laying a foundation for making sense of how pertinent aspects influence task performance in Kenyan Public service. However, none of the studies assessed above have discussed the emerging trends that have an effect in task performance such as remote working, hybrid working, increased job mobility which are common practices in the job market after COVID, Micro Learning or Artificial Intelligence. This therefore, indicates that not much research has been done on emerging trends such as remote working, hybrid working, gig economy, diversity and inclusion in development, employee engagement and Micro learning as aspect of career advancement in Kenyan Public Service. The researchers pegged their research work purely on establishing at a broad level whether there is fusion of emerging trends, and whether they have been incorporated into performance in Kenyan public service. Conclusions drawn and recommendations made from these researches therefore is that they have minimal discussions on current and emerging trends.

2.1. Emerging Trends in Task Performance Practices

Emerging trends may be conceptualized as aspects, behaviors or even patterns that are gradually gaining popularity levels within a specified niche or context. They are in many forms and factors such as cultural diversities, transpired occurrences, customer feedback and even technological advances. This research shall therefore focus on the emerging trends that relate to task performance within organizations.

Statistics have revealed that approximately 76% of employees in any organization are seeking opportunities for career advancement ([Flynn, 2023](#)). Research has further revealed that 86% of employees would switch from their current job given an opportunity for career development and advancement by another employer ([Klemperer, 2019](#)). Today's breed of workers is a fusion of the older generation as well as the millennials and the Gen Z. The last two categories are constantly in pursuit of career advancement as well as any available opportunities to build their skills ([Wells, 2023](#)). In order for organizations to retain the staff they have; it is of paramount importance that they incorporate emerging trends into Career advancement and advancement practices in their Human Resource Departments with the full support of top management. Trends such as remote working increase the rate of job satisfaction, introduces flexible schedules to the staff, hence availing to them opportunities to develop new skills that may enhance productivity and eventually all these lead to career growth.

Research done has revealed that 16% of organizations globally are purely remote based operating optimally with absolutely no physical offices ([Haan, 2024](#)). [Haan \(2024\)](#) further states that 98% of employees desire to work remotely at least some of the time. Statistics have projected that in America, a total population of 32.6 million people in the labor force will be working remotely ([Upwork, 2024](#)). In Africa, 30% of companies have adopted some form of remote work strategies since Covid 19 ([Ileri, 2024](#)) while in Kenya, a survey conducted in 2023 revealed that 46% of employers are preferring to engage in the virtual space because of the rising costs in terms of operations as well as cash flow challenges ([Sitawa, 2023](#)). Remote work however may breed feelings of disconnect and isolation from organizational culture hence distraction and minimal output ([Ileri, 2024](#)).

[McKendrick \(2023\)](#) recommends new approaches to leadership that focusses on opportunities for remote and hybrid workers. Besides introducing policies that may be incorporated in the existing task performance guidelines to support hybrid and remote working, management in any organization must consider investing in infrastructure that will provide a level playing field for all employees regardless of where they are working from ([McKendrick, 2023](#)). Hybrid working models and approaches allow for work flexibility and autonomy while at the same time maintaining opportunities for in-person collaboration and team building ([Ileri, 2024](#)).

Gig economies may be conceptualized as economies where the conduct of transactions is temporary, in often cases freelance in nature while at sometimes transactions happen on the basis of a contract ([Kwanya & Kutoma, 2023](#)). Gig economy transactions happen on digital web-based labour platforms. Such platforms connect opportunities with the workers using algorithms then immediately provide an opportunity for rating done by the client as a performance management measure ([Meijerink & Keegan, 2019](#)). Such ratings may inform the basis through which employers promote their staff. Research has it that in Kenya, 89.8% of gig economy workers are dependent on the gigs as their primary source of livelihood while only 10.2% depend on the gigs as a supplement to additional revenue ([Kwanya & Kutoma, 2023](#)). [Kwanya and Kutoma \(2023\)](#) in their research further reveal that 34% of gig economy workers admit that their earnings are steady, 27% of gig workers admit that the earnings are neither steady nor inconsistent, while the remaining 39% admit that the earnings are inconsistent. [Kwanya and Kutoma \(2023\)](#) further underscored the importance of the Kenyan Government recognizing gig workers as employees with rights that need to be protected, as well as regulating platforms on which these gig economy workers operate as a way of guaranteeing justice and worker welfare to this category of laborers.

Micro learning can be conceptualized as the use of content organized in small chunks and sent to recipients with an intention of enhancing their overall comprehension and retention (Charles, 2019). Micro learning as an emerging trend is essential in organizations as a task performance enhancement strategy since it enhances upskilling and reduces the time workers spend away from the office engaged in training. Statistically, the human brain finds it difficult to sustain focused attention for more than 20 minutes and therefore, incorporation of Micro learning strategies into public service performance would be beneficial as information fed to staff in smaller chunks has a higher chance of being retained, hence enhancing their productivity.

Artificial intelligence is undoubtedly one of the most essential innovations globally with the practitioners of professions across board as well as the researchers at all levels looking towards obtaining solutions that may streamline processes in all their functions. The role of artificial intelligence (AI) in Workplace practices has been on the rise gradually hence, transforming the way Human Resource processes are conducted in all critical areas. However, Palos-Sánchez, Baena-Luna, Badicu, and Infante-Moro (2022) established that most employees still have a contrary attitude to the application of AI in HRM practices because of aspects such as lack of skills, as well as the phobia of job replacement by machines.

Incorporation of artificial intelligence into Work place practices will help to save on time, reduce costs and incorporate real time experience through the use of chatbots into Human Resource Management practices hence streamlining processes and improving management of functions and overall work efficiency (Nawaz, Arunachalam, Pathi, & Gajenderan, 2024). Nawaz et al. (2024) further offer that “as disruptive technologies like AI become inevitable, the workforce needs to equip themselves with the required skill sets to survive the job market competition.” Through incorporation of AI into relevant functions strategically geared towards streamlining of public service tasks and with the attainment of relevant skills to help public servants survive job competition, these public service employees will therefore be able to function optimally hence chart a visible path that would lead to their career advancement. The Management would also have a role at adopting strategies that would ensure that staff perceptions are transformed and they are provided with an environment to help them fully cope with the changes in order to realize optimal functioning.

3. Methodology

A descriptive, cross-sectional survey was adopted for this study based on its ease of use and applicability to the context of this research. Cross sectional studies are observational in nature. The target population is analyzed at a single point in time, with no follow up or going back in time to check for causality (Wang & Cheng, 2020). This process is beneficial since it collects even the data that respondents may not remember when filling in a questionnaire. This study employed convenience sampling as the study population is easily accessible, works in the same unit, is a representative of the civil service and their total number is relatively small. This study sought to make sense of workplace emerging trends that have an impact on task performance in the Kenyan Public Service all informed by perceptions from certain groups of people. The research sought to explore how emerging trends impact on work performance with the aim of informing policy makers in the Kenyan public service.

Online Questionnaires were sent to the sampled respondents to be filled. The benefits of the questionnaires include the different perspectives on an issue a researcher might get from the respondents and the uniformity of the questions, which makes the analysis straight forward. The questions were set in a Likert scale, with respondents being tasked to show their level of agreement to particular questions. An interviewing schedule was prepared in order to collect information from the Human Resource Management (HRM) Department. The core benefit of interviews is that a given researcher/ interviewer can adjust the questions as deemed necessary, they may rephrase or repeat the said question, ensure that the responses are properly understood, hence clarify any occurrence of doubt. Purposive sampling was applied to select the HRM practitioners to participate in the research interviews. The researcher normally adopts purposive sampling based on their assessment that sampled strata has a uniqueness that would fit the study's objectives (Bisht, 2024).

HRM practitioners have good knowledge of the emerging trends aligned to work performance in public service and are therefore resourceful and were able to shed more light on this topic. Qualitative data generated from interview schedules was organized into themes, categories and patterns pertinent to the study.

The target population was the total number of staff that were legally employed by Kibabii University on Permanent and Pensionable terms of service at the time of the study. Simple descriptive analytics was used to understand the characteristics of the sample data sets. This enabled assessment on the impact of career progression on performance among the staff. Data processing and analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 23).

The study made a number of ethical considerations throughout the research cycle. First and foremost, the respondents were assured that the data would be used to achieve the objective of this research only and for no other purpose whatsoever. Measures were taken to safeguard the data provided by assigning password protection on the machines and on the questionnaire so as to keep off unauthorized access as suggested by Nanda and Kumar (2021). In order to maintain the confidentiality and protects the privacy the specific

respondents represented, no identifying information was included in this report as only aggregated data was analyzed and discussed.

4. Results

Descriptive analysis of the respondents' demographic profile reveal that the majority of respondents in the sample (N = 50) were male, comprising 56% (28), while females accounted for 44% (22). Most participants had extensive experience in public service, with 40% (20) reporting over 10 years of tenure and 32% (16) having 5–10 years, while fewer had 3–5 years (12%, 6), 1–3 years (12%, 6), or less than 1 year (4%, 2). In terms of educational level, the largest group held master's degrees (44%, 22), followed by those with PhDs (32%, 16) and bachelor's degrees (24%, 12). **Table 1** Presents the Demographic profiles of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents.

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	22	44%
	Male	28	56%
	Total	50	100%
Number of years working in public service	1 - 3 years	6	12%
	3 - 5 years	6	12%
	5 - 10 years	16	32%
	Above 10 years	20	40%
	Below 1 year	2	4%
	Total	50	100%
Highest educational level	Bachelors	12	24%
	Masters	22	44%
	PhD	16	32%
	Total	50	100%

4.1. Staff Understanding of Emerging Trends in Task Performance Practices

The first aim of the study was to investigate whether staff have an understanding of the emerging trends aligned to task performance practices in the Kenyan Public service. **Figure 1** ranks the emerging trends by level of respondents' familiarity. The majority of respondents (96%, 48) reported having heard of the term "remote working" in this context, making it the most recognized trend. This was followed by "hybrid working" and "Artificial Intelligence," each acknowledged by 88% (44) of respondents. The term "Micro Learning" was familiar to 66% (33) of participants, while "gig economy" was the least recognized, with 56% (28) of respondents indicating awareness.

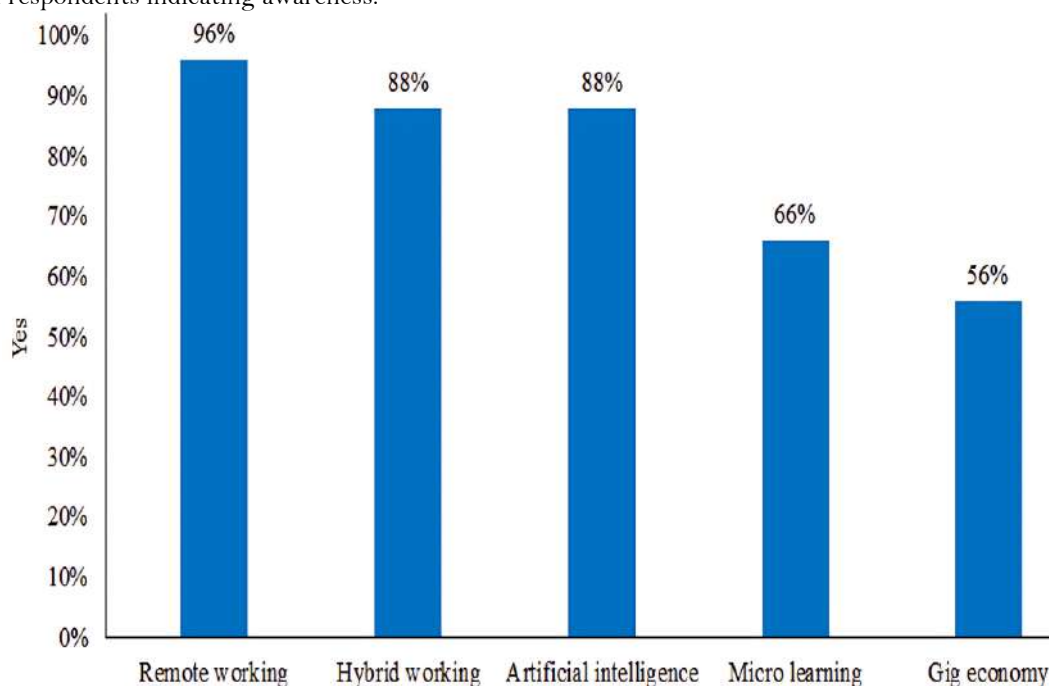


Figure 1. Awareness of emerging trends aligned to task performance in public service.

Respondents were asked to rate their level of familiarity with the emerging trends. As illustrated in Figure 2, majority (68%, 34) of the respondents were somewhat familiar while 32% (16) of the respondents were very familiar with the trends.

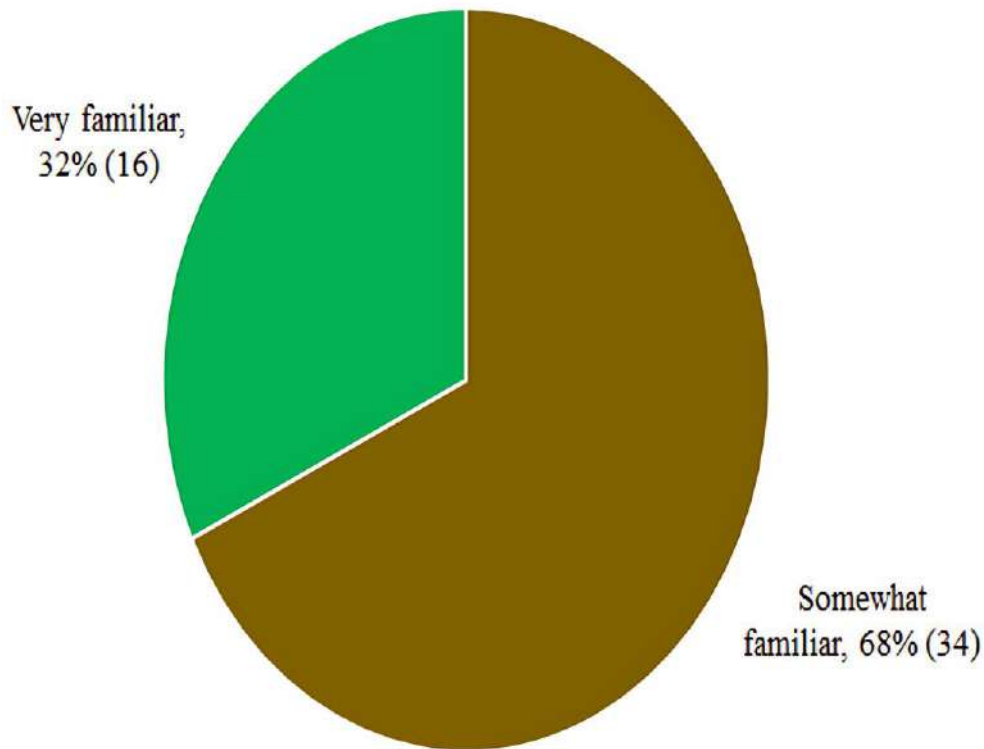


Figure 2. Respondents' level of familiarity with emerging trends.

4.2. Fusion of Emerging Trends in Public Service

The second objective of the study was to establish whether the emerging trends have been fused into task performance practices in the Kenyan Public service. As shown in Figure 3, findings indicate that 72% (36) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "remote working" and "Artificial Intelligence" practices are currently being integrated into service delivery. This was followed by "hybrid working," with 70% (35) of respondents indicating its integration. "Micro learning" practices were reported as integrated by 64% (32) of participants, while "gig economy" practices had the lowest perceived integration, with 42% (21) of respondents in agreement.

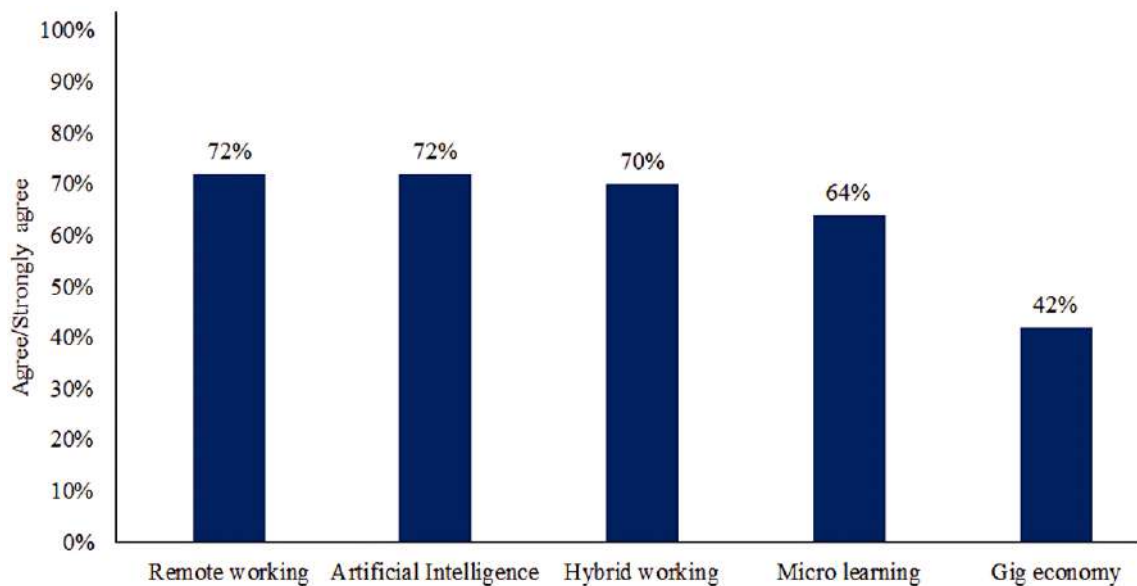


Figure 3. Whether emerging trends are currently integrated into service delivery.

Respondents were also asked whether their organization has incorporated the emerging trends into performance management and job progression practices. Respondents reported varying levels of incorporation of emerging trends into performance management and job progression practices, with "hybrid working" being the most widely adopted at 62%, followed by "remote working" at 56%. "Micro Learning" was noted by 52% of respondents as incorporated into task performance. However, only 34% reported that "gig economy" practices are included in their organization, and just 22% indicated that tailor-made chatbots are used to handle frequently asked questions some Kenyan public service organization.

Figure 4 Illustrates the Incorporation of emerging trends into performance management.

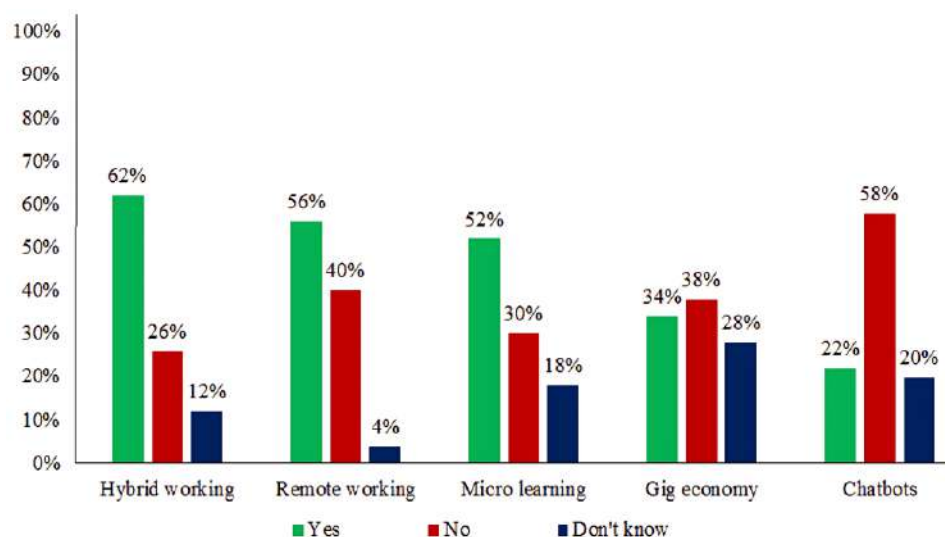


Figure 4. Incorporation of emerging trends into performance management.

4.3. Effects of Emerging Trends on Public Service Delivery

Respondents were asked how they thought the integration of emerging trends affects service delivery in the Kenyan public service. Thematic analysis revealed four salient themes. These were: Efficiency and Productivity, Flexibility and Work-Life Balance, Inclusion and Diversity, and Challenges and Concerns. The most salient theme was Efficiency and Productivity. Many respondents noted that the integration of emerging trends enhances efficiency and productivity within the public service. Responses highlighted that these trends lead to quicker service delivery, improved performance objectives, and the ability to work more effectively. For example, respondents mentioned how hybrid and remote working can speed up services and how gig economy trends can lead to better human capital productivity. This was evident in the following verbatim excerpts:

"Improves productivity and ultimately assist in career advancement" (Respondent #4).

"Speeds up services, creates room for improvement and also upgrade of existing services" (Respondent #17).

"It enhances efficiency in service delivery" (Respondent #44).

Flexibility and Work-Life Balance was another salient theme as several responses emphasized the flexibility provided by these emerging trends, which positively impacts employees' work-life balance. The ability to work remotely and adapt to hybrid models was seen as a way to create a more accommodating work environment, allowing employees to manage their time and responsibilities better. This flexibility was highlighted as a crucial factor in attracting and retaining talent, especially among younger generations. This was exemplified in the following verbatim responses:

"This has led to increased flexibility and better work life balance" (Respondent #15).

"Hybrid work strategy increases productivity, minimizes cost and enhances work life balance for employees" (Respondent #39).

"This infuses flexibility in the workplace" (Respondent #47).

Inclusion and Diversity was also a manifest theme as the integration of emerging trends was seen as a way to promote diversity and inclusion within the public service. Respondents noted that hybrid and remote working arrangements can create a more diverse workforce and enhance creativity. Additionally, the inclusion of AI and micro-learning was mentioned as tools that can support equitable service delivery by addressing different learning needs and styles. This theme was reflected in the following verbatim comments:

"It enhances diversity and promotes creativity in the public service" (Respondent #3).

"It enhances service delivery since it enables workers to perform their duties in tandem with the set targets regardless of hindrances" (Respondent #12).

"The integration of these emerging trends in Kenyan public service offers immense potential to revolutionize how services are delivered, making them more efficient, flexible, and citizen-centered" (Respondent #42).

The integration of emerging trends in the Kenyan public service however raised several challenges and concerns among respondents. There is apprehension about job security, as some employees fear job loss while others seek the flexibility that these trends offer, leading to mixed feelings about the changes. Additionally, there is a significant lack of public awareness regarding these trends, which can hinder their effective implementation. The absence of a structured induction process for new practices contributes to inefficiencies, as the current framework may not adequately support the transition to these emerging models. The transient nature of gig employment also presents challenges, as gig workers frequently leave projects before completion, disrupting workflows. Despite recognizing the potential for these trends to revolutionize service delivery, respondents emphasize the necessity for careful planning and resource investment to avoid exacerbating existing issues in the public service. This was apparent in the following verbatim expressions.

"There is mixed feeling since some fear job lose while other want the freedom brought about by these" (Respondent #10).

"There is minimum public awareness on these trends" (Respondent 14).

"Yes, it affects because public service is not inducted" (Respondent 19).

"Gig employees keep on looking for the next opportunity hence leaving before your project is finished" (Respondent 23).

"The integration of these emerging trends in Kenyan public service offers immense potential to revolutionize how services are delivered, making them more efficient, flexible, and citizen-centered. However, careful planning, policy adjustments, and investment in infrastructure are needed to address the associated challenges and ensure that service delivery remains equitable, secure, and sustainable" (Respondent 34).

4.4. Proposed Improvements for Better Integration

Respondents were asked to propose improvements to better integrate emerging trends into task performance practices within the Kenyan Public Service. The responses obtained yielded four thematic suggestions: Infrastructure and Technological Investment, Capacity Building and Training, Policy Reforms and Organizational Adaptability, and Awareness and Engagement.

In terms of Infrastructure and Technological Investment, many respondents emphasize the need for improved digital infrastructure, including ICT systems and technological tools, to support the integration of emerging trends like remote work, AI, and data analytics. Improved infrastructure is seen as essential for enhancing efficiency, streamlining processes, and enabling modernized public service delivery. Some of the verbatim remarks in support of this theme were as follows:

"Provision of ICT infrastructure in all public institutions." (Respondent #32).

"More into investing in digital infrastructure, enhancing of relevant policies and regular trainings." (Respondent #18).

"Kenyan Public Service should have good ICT infrastructure and train its staff on digital literacy skills." (Respondent #38).

"Leveraging AI-Powered Virtual Assistant to address commonly requested ICT Technical Support Services." (Respondent #47).

The second theme is Capacity Building and Training as evidenced by a strong call for continuous training, professional development, and capacity-building initiatives to equip public service employees with skills necessary to handle emerging trends. Respondents highlighted the importance of retooling and upskilling workers to interpret and implement new technologies effectively, as well as to foster positive attitudes toward these changes. Some of the verbatim responses were as follows:

"Training of personnel with requisite skills to interpret new developments." (Respondent #7).

"Sensitization and Capacity building of workers to retool and acquaint them with relevant knowledge, skills and Competencies required to implement the Ideals of emerging trends." (Respondent #12).

"Training the workforce on the emerging trends and their place in enhancing efficiency." (Respondent #19).

"Enhance continuous professional development in line with the emerging trends." (Respondent #41).

Policy Reform and Organizational Adaptability was another theme as respondents point to the need for policy changes that reduce bureaucracy, promote inclusivity, and align public sector practices with evolving global standards. There is also mention of a shift in organizational culture to embrace flexibility, accountability, and inclusivity in decision-making and management practices, ensuring employees are actively involved in the integration of new trends. A sample of the verbatim views are as follows:

"Reduction of bureaucracy in adaptation of emerging trends." (Respondent #3).

"The public sector needs to borrow much from the private sector where performance is measured objectively, effectively and efficiently." (Respondent #30).

"Change the work culture to accommodate current dynamics." (Respondent #24).

"There is need for policy to help in integrating these emerging technologies into public service." (Respondent #46).

The theme of Awareness and Engagement was also apparent from the views of the respondents. The importance of creating awareness and actively engaging employees in understanding and applying new trends is frequently noted. Respondents suggest that sensitization efforts, seminars, and participative approaches will help mitigate resistance, address concerns, and build a workforce that is more receptive to innovations like hybrid work models, AI integration, and flexible policies. This was reflected in the following verbatim examples.

"Staff sensitization and capacity building for attitude change." (Respondent #33).

"Awareness creation, training, improved infrastructure, and policy." (Respondent #34).

"Creating awareness." (Respondent #45).

"To give chance to employees to get their input on how best service can be improved through emerging trends." (Respondent #23).

5. Discussion

In terms of staff understanding of the emerging trends aligned to task performance practices in the Kenyan Public service, the high recognition of "remote working" and significant familiarity with "hybrid working" and "Artificial Intelligence" suggest that staff are aware of the modern workplace dynamics that can enhance productivity and career advancement. This is in contrast to Hedge and Rineer (2017) whose study found that most staff members were not aware of or familiar with emerging trends. However, it is essential to consider that Hedge and Rineer's study was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic, a period when awareness of such trends had not yet surged. The pandemic forced companies and employees to adapt to new work models without compromising health containment measures. This echoes the need for organizations to integrate such trends into their performance assessments and career progression models (Abga & Bello, 2023; Gyansah & Guantai, 2018). However, the relatively lower recognition of "Micro Learning" and "gig economy" indicates a potential gap in staff understanding of critical skills and knowledge essential for career growth, which is consistent with concerns raised by Hedge and Rineer (2017) regarding the lack of awareness among employees about necessary competencies for advancement. Furthermore, the findings that a significant portion of respondents are only somewhat familiar with these trends underscore the importance of organizations fostering a collaborative environment focused on upskilling and career development (Obunga et al., 2024; Santos et al., 2020).

The strong agreement on the integration of "remote working" and "Artificial Intelligence" into service delivery resonates with Haan (2024) findings that a significant portion of global organizations now operate without physical offices and that workers prefer remote work. Similarly, the recognition of "hybrid working" as being widely adopted correlates with Ileri (2024) observation of its increased relevance post-COVID-19, as organizations sought flexibility to maintain productivity during the pandemic. However, the reported lower integration of "Artificial Intelligence" into performance management reflects Palos-Sánchez et al. (2022) who noted a low acceptance rate of AI in human resource management, partly due to workforce skill gaps and fears of job displacement (Nawaz et al., 2024). The lower perceived integration of "gig economy" practices corroborates Kwanya and Kutoma (2023) findings on the slow adoption of gig-based work within government sectors, suggesting a need for further efforts to integrate such models into public service practices.

The emphasis on efficiency and productivity as an emergent theme aligns with Nawaz et al. (2024) who noted that adopting Artificial Intelligence can streamline processes and enhance organizational performance. Moreover, the recognition of flexibility and work-life balance as crucial benefits resonates with Ileri (2024) observations about the hybrid model promoting job flexibility and autonomy. The theme of inclusion and diversity also finds support in the literature, as the integration of remote and hybrid working arrangements can indeed foster a more diverse workforce and enhance creativity, echoing the sentiments in the respondents' comments about equity and performance alignment (Peplińska et al., 2011). However, the challenges identified, such as job security concerns and lack of public awareness, reflect a gap in the literature concerning the implementation and transition to these emerging practices. The mixed feelings about job loss versus the desire for flexibility highlight a need for careful planning and investment in infrastructure, as suggested by the respondents, which has not been explicitly addressed in the literature.

6. Recommendations

To better integrate emerging trends into task performance practices within the Kenyan Public Service, significant improvements must be made across several key areas. First, there is a clear need for enhanced infrastructure and technological investment to provide the necessary tools and systems that support modern work practices. Secondly, continuous capacity building and training for employees are essential to equip them

with the skills needed to adapt to and effectively implement these emerging trends. Additionally, policy reforms are critical to reduce bureaucratic obstacles and promote a culture of flexibility and inclusivity, which are vital for the successful adoption of new practices. Finally, fostering awareness and engagement among staff is crucial to mitigate resistance and encourage a proactive approach to innovation.

Future research should focus some key areas to build on the findings regarding the understanding and integration of emerging trends in the Kenyan Public Service. Further investigation into the specific barriers hindering the integration of artificial intelligence and gig economy practices within public service performance management is necessary, as current literature reflects a gap in understanding the workforce's readiness and acceptance of these innovations. In addition, qualitative research could delve deeper into employee attitudes towards job security amid these transitions, offering a nuanced perspective that could inform strategies for mitigating concerns and enhancing the adoption of these emerging concepts.

7. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that there is a significant awareness of emerging trends in task performance practices among Kenyan Public Service staff, with remote working being the most recognized concept. Despite the high recognition rates for hybrid working and artificial intelligence, the lower awareness of micro learning and the gig economy suggests a need for further education in these areas. The familiarity levels indicate that while most staff have at least some knowledge of these trends, there remains a considerable opportunity for enhanced training and resources to ensure comprehensive understanding and effective integration of all identified practices in the workplace.

While significant progress has been made in integrating emerging trends into task performance practices in the Kenyan Public Service, challenges remain. A majority of respondents recognize the incorporation of remote working and artificial intelligence, suggesting a positive shift towards modern practices. However, the lower integration levels of micro learning and gig economy practices indicate that these concepts are not being fully leveraged. Furthermore, the variation in adoption rates across different trends highlights a need for targeted strategies to enhance the integration of less recognized practices, such as gig economy strategies and the use of chatbots. This disparity suggests that although the Kenyan Public Service is on a path toward full integration, further initiatives are essential to ensure comprehensive adoption and to optimize overall service delivery.

While the integration of emerging trends in the Kenyan public service has the potential to significantly enhance service delivery through improved efficiency, productivity, flexibility, and inclusivity, it also faces notable challenges. Respondents overwhelmingly recognized that trends such as remote and hybrid working contribute to faster service and a better work-life balance, which are essential for attracting and retaining talent. However, concerns about job security, public awareness, and the lack of structured support for new practices highlight the complexities of this transition. Additionally, the transient nature of gig employment poses risks to workflow stability. Therefore, for these emerging trends to be successfully integrated and for their benefits to be fully realized, careful planning, policy adjustments, and significant investment in infrastructure are essential to address these challenges and ensure a positive impact on service delivery.

References

- Abga, M. M., & Bello, M. F. (2023). Career progression and workers' motivation in the Nigerian public service. *International Journal of Public Administration and Management Research*, 8(5), 52-63.
- Atendo, E., Getande, R., & Otengah, R. (2022). Investigated the influence of the Teachers Service Commission's career progression on teachers' performance in Kenya. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 15(4), 112-125.
- Bisht, R. (2024). *What is purposive sampling? Methods, techniques, and examples [Research Reading]*. Retrieved from <https://researcher.life/blog/article/what-is-purposive-sampling-methods-techniques-and-examples/>
- Charles, R. (2019). Microlearning can be conceptualized as the use of content organized in small chunks and sent to recipients with an intention. *Journal of Educational Technology and Innovation*, 14(3), 87-102.
- Flynn, J. (2023). *35 key employee training and development statistics: Data + trends Career Counseling*. Retrieved from <https://www.zipppia.com/employer/employee-training-development-statistics/>
- Gyansah, A., & Guantai, J. M. (2018). Navigating the organization towards a strategic direction to enhance competitive advantage. *Journal of Business Strategy and Management*, 12(3), 45-59.
- Haan, K. (2024). *Remote work statistics and trends in 2024. Business*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/remote-work-statistics/>
- Hedge, J. W., & Rineer, J. R. (2017). *Improving career development opportunities through rigorous career pathways research*: RTI Press. <https://doi.org/10.3768/rtipress.2017.op.0037.1703>.
- Hope, O.-K., Thomas, W. B., & Vyas, D. (2013). Financial reporting quality of US private and public firms. *The Accounting Review*, 88(5), 1715-1742.
- Igbokwe-Ibeto, C., Ewuim, N., & Agbodike, F. (2015). Nigerian government and oil subsidy regime: A horn of dilemma. *International Journal of Development and Management Review*, 10(1), 188-200.
- Ireri, S. (2024). *Should remote work remain a permanent option in the post-pandemic world? Business*. Retrieved from <https://management-africa.co.ke/2024/08/05/should-remote-work-remain-a-permanent-option-in-the-post-pandemic-world/>
- Kiiru, D. K. (2019). Work Environment and Performance of Employees in Public Health Sector in Nairobi County, Kenya.

- Kirai, M. N. (2013). *Barriers to women career progression in Kenya's civil service*. [Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation]. Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.
- Klemperer, S. (2019). *The employee experience will be critical to business success in 2019, according to new hiring outlook report by the Execu|Search group*. News. Retrieved from <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/the-employee-experience-will-be-critical-to-business-success-in-2019-according-to-new-hiring-outlook-report-by-the-execusearch-group-300773946.html>
- Kwanya, T., & Kutoma, J. W. (2023). Regulation of digital platforms for a socially-just gig economy in Kenya.
- McKendrick, J. (2023). *How remote and hybrid work alters career paths*. *Innovation*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joemckendrick/2023/03/14/how-remote-and-hybrid-work-alters-career-paths/?sh=2d0aa8b87f94>
- Meijerink, J., & Keegan, A. (2019). Conceptualizing human resource management in the gig economy: Toward a platform ecosystem perspective. *Journal of managerial psychology, 34*(4), 214-232. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-07-2018-0277>
- Mugaa, L. G., Guyo, W., & Otieno, R. O. (2018). Influence of career progression on employee performance in large commercial banks in Nairobi City County in Kenya. *Journal of Entrepreneurship & Project Management, 2*(2), 1-19.
- Muthini, M. A. (2019). *Challenges affecting effective implementation of succession management strategy in the civil service of Kenya*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nairobi.
- Mwangi, E. N., & Gachunga, H. (2016). Influence of career development on service delivery in the public sector. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management, 3*(4), 320-340.
- Nanda, P., & Kumar, V. (2021). Social media analytics: Tools, techniques and present day practices. *International Journal of Services Operations and Informatics, 11*(4), 422-436.
- Nawaz, N., Arunachalam, H., Pathi, B. K., & Gajenderan, V. (2024). The adoption of artificial intelligence in human resources management practices. *International Journal of Information Management Data Insights, 4*(1), 100208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijime.2023.100208>
- Obunga, P. A., Were, S., & Muchelule, Y. (2024). Employee job promotion practices and employee retention among non-governmental organizations in Kenya. *Journal of Human Resource & Leadership, 8*(2), 100-115. <https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t5312>
- Orishede, F. (2022). Organizational culture and career progression in public enterprise. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies, 3*(5), 1-8.
- Palos-Sánchez, P. R., Baena-Luna, P., Badicu, A., & Infante-Moro, J. C. (2022). Artificial intelligence and human resources management: A bibliometric analysis. *Applied Artificial Intelligence, 36*(1), 214-5631. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08839514.2022.2145631>
- Peplińska, A., Lipowski, M., & Nieckarz, Z. (2011). Career and professional development—challenges for employees and modern organizations. *Polish Journal of Social Science, 6*(1), 75-100.
- Santos, A., Armanu, A., Setiawan, M., & Rofiq, A. (2020). Effect of recruitment, selection and culture of organizations on state personnel performance. *Management Science Letters, 10*(6), 1179-1186. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.11.042>
- Sitawa, M. (2023). *More Kenyans to work remotely, says forecast*. *Business Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/economy/more-kenyans-to-work-remotely-says-forecast-4431506>
- SRC. (2023). *Annual report 2023*. Retrieved from <https://www.kenyanews.go.ke/tag/salaries-and-remuneration-commission-src/>
- Upwork. (2024). *Statistics have projected that in America, a total population of 32.6 million people in the labor force will be working remotely*. Upwork Remote Work Report, 2024.
- Veronica, R., Felistus, M., & Hannah, B. (2021). Career development and employee performance in Kenya forestry research institute headquarters in Muguga, Kiambu county. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management, United Kingdom, 9*(4), 123-137.
- Wang, X., & Cheng, Z. (2020). Cross-sectional studies: Strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations. *Chest, 158*(1), S65-S71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chest.2020.03.012>
- Wangechi, B., Anne, S., & Kiragu, D. N. u. (2018). Role of reward systems on job satisfaction of employees in the County Government of Nyeri, Kenya.
- Wawira, B. N., Mathews, G. B., Machogu, C. G., & Wanjala, J. W. (2017). Effects of career stagnation on performance in public service: A case of Murang'a county government. *International Journal of Science and Research, 6*(7), 1640-1648.
- Wells, A. (2023). The last two categories are constantly in pursuit of career advancement as well as any available opportunities to build their skills. *Journal of Career Development and Training, 28*(1), 45-58.
- Zhenjing, G., Chupradit, S., Ku, K. Y., Nassani, A. A., & Haffar, M. (2022). Impact of employees' workplace environment on employees' performance: A multi-mediation model. *Frontiers in Public Health, 10*, 890400. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.890400>