

Effect of Career Counselling on Employee Performance in Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited



Christine Syombua Kathukya, Caroline Igoki Mwangi, Clifford Machogu

Abstract: Career counseling is a career development initiative in which career education is provided to workers by career counselors to help them appreciate their motivations, explain their objectives, commit to action, navigate career transitions, and learn how they can contribute to the organization's overall effectiveness. The fundamental aims of counseling are to foster behavioral improvement, support decision-making, facilitate the capacity of clients, develop coping skills and improve relationships. Employee performance is a major challenge in organizational management and the key goal of any business enterprise is to take steps to inspire workers to deliver and achieve organizational competitiveness. This study sought to establish the effects of career counselling practices on employee performance in Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited (MUWASCO) in Murang'a County in Kenya. Specifically the study sought to establish the extent to which career coaching, career guidance and counseling programs have influenced employee performance in MUWASCO. The study was guided by trait and factor theory. Descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study. The target population was 150 employees and the researcher employed census sampling technique. The data collection instrument was self-administered questionnaires. Absolute forms of mean, standard deviation and percentages were employed in descriptive analysis. Regression analysis was used to establish the relationship between dependent and the independent variables of the study. The response rate was 85% hence reliability and validity of the study. From the analysis it was observed that the organization has implemented career counseling and this positively contributed to employee performance. A positive and significant relationship between the variables under investigation was demonstrated. The researcher recommends that the organization under study should formulate a clear policy on career coaching to help workers define their personal goals, prepare their career plans and address their needs. The study also suggests provision of adequate information on career guidance and a career guidance policy directed towards enhancing the competencies of workers.

Keywords: Career Counselling, Career Development, Performance

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I. INTRODUCTION

Career Development is one of the emerging issues in Human Resource management that has an impact on the organization's performance. Therefore organizations come up with Career management programs with an aim to integrate the organizational goals with those of the individuals. The organization takes up passing information on Career development opportunities to employees. Career Development is a life career process from early career, mid-career to late career. Career Counselling is one of the Career Development practices that an organization may use to encourage their employees to develop their careers. Employee performance is key to organization performance. This paper focusses on the effect of career counselling practices on employee performance in a Water and sanitation company. The research data was collected during the Covid-19 period when clean water services were not only essential but the motivation of the workers to go an extra mile was needed. The findings show that career counselling practices have an effect on employee performance. It is hoped that these findings will inform policy makers of the institution but also shed more light on the need to focus on Career Counselling as a career development practice for other organizations too.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Career counseling is a career development initiative in which career education is provided to workers by career counselors to help them appreciate their motivations, explain their objectives, commit to action, navigate career transitions, and learn how they can contribute to the organization's overall effectiveness (Morgan, 2008). The fundamental aims of counseling are to foster behavioral improvement, support decision-making, facilitate the capacity of clients, develop coping skills and improve relationships (Lufthans, 2011). The goal is to help the client develop self-acceptance and comprehension. Career counseling is described by Gichinga (2011) as a relationship in which one person helps another to understand and solve their career issues. The therapy provides perspectives, advice, and encouragement to help a person recognize and navigate diverse and alternative career choices (Nthangi, 2007). The career advisor encourages employees to make and justify career choices and decisions and also helps them make adjustments such as redundancy or choose a new career. Career counselling consists of career coaching, career guidance, and counseling programs.

Career counseling promotes career preparation and understanding in organizations, workplaces, and the community through career counselors. Counseling helps employees consider their cognitive patterns, their qualities, and how they can contribute to the strategic purpose of the company (Mc Auley, 2011). Morgan (2008) emphasized that career growth gives the best knowledge to employees, improves their capacity to make choices and opportunities to experience work life. The Career Guidance Analysis (2013) describes career counseling as programs and activities designed to help people make choices about training, career choice, and career management. Savickas (2015) asserted that career coaching is a relationship between a trained coach and a client that is limited in time. He added that career coaching seeks to evaluate the developmental status of clients in terms of expertise, direct clients to opportunities and challenges, and improve the knowledge and skills necessary. Career coaching helps in developing career identity, analyzing strengths and weaknesses, and analyzing crucial career choices, according to (Chang, 2013). Career guidance encourages individual staff to make the best choices and make full use of their potential (Nurihsan, 2006). It is described by Super (1957) as the process of helping employees establish the acceptance and contribution of self-union in the working world. Individuals may plan their personal lives, taking into account their circumstances and the environment, through career guidance. Fitzpatrick, Monda and Wooding (2016) believed that career guidance offers direction, preparation capacity, decision-making adequacy, career readiness, and career maturity. When workers feel qualified to perform their work, employee satisfaction arises, which can be accomplished by improved career development. Thomas and Feldman (2010) said that understanding the effect of career development helps the top management to build a healthier working atmosphere that eventually increases both the level of motivation and the efficiency of the workforce. Sadikoglu and Cemal (2010) added that employee performance includes improved quality and quantity, presence at work, accommodative and helpful nature, and timeliness of output. Performance is the accomplishment of particular tasks calculated against predetermined precision, completeness, improvement, incentives, penalties, feedback, and cost standards (Waseem, Frooghi and Afshan, 2013). Nazir and Islam (2017) stress that employee performance can be expressed in increased efficiency, ease of use of modern technologies, engaged workers, and high job performance levels. Liao, Lu CY, Huang and Chiang (2012) added that job performance meets the need for workers to know their ability. Employee performance is a measure of the confidence of workers in their actions and contributions to the achievement of organizational objectives and goals (Ahmad and Khurram, 2011). Employee performance is a major challenge in organizational management and the key goal of any business enterprise is to take steps to inspire workers to deliver and achieve organizational competitiveness (Lee and Wu, 2011). Employees are seen by Muda, Rafiki and Harahap (2014) as the major resource that promotes an organization's everyday operations and activities. Therefore, output of workers is instrumental in organizational efficiency, development, and profitability. Oluwafemi (2010) added that an organization's effectiveness depends on its employees' productivity. Counseling programs are structured to deal with organizational concerns (Masi, 2011). For the benefit of

individuals and the organization as a whole, each program is designed to meet a particular purpose. Haasler and Barabasch (2015) indicated that a counseling program's progress is calculated against the targets set at the planning stage. Employee counseling services, according to Musyimi (2020), mitigate organizational behaviors such as frustration, absenteeism, aggression, drug abuse, and job disputes that impair organizational effectiveness and affect employee efficiency. Employees who adopted the counseling services reported a 100 percent increase in job efficiency, according to a study done by (Rajin, 2012).

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Water in Murang'a County is an essential commodity for all citizens. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has stressed the community's need for water, hence the high reliance on MUWASCO. The organization under study has invested in career counseling, however, the output is not as planned to provide residents in Murang'a town and its surroundings with adequate and clean water. Complaints from the employees are a clear indication that career counseling has not been effectively implemented to meet the needs of all workers. Lack of adequate information on career guidance being the major challenge is a clear indicator that career counseling was inefficient hence the poor performance. The link between career counseling and employee performance in the public sector has been extensively studied elsewhere and published in HR journals, but very few such studies are carried out in Kenya. Water companies have not been as vigilant as other industries in improving the careers of their labor force. According to Kenya's Business Review Management (2013), the country faces skills shortages. Hiring, attracting, educating, and retaining the right professionals being the major obstacles. In today's competitive business environment, finding a method of attracting, developing, motivating and retaining competent people is critical (Sara et al, 2010). The demand for human capital drives the need for career counseling in organizations. Career counselling can be used as a motivational factor to maximize employee morale and enhance productivity. MUWASCO's workforce has been very relevant in ensuring that all people have reliable sources of safe and sufficient water. Reviewed literature indicated a gap in this area therefore this study sought to establish the extent to which career counseling affects employee performance in MUWASCO. In an attempt to address the research gap above, the researcher chose the organization under study as a research population.

A. The Objective of the Study

This study was designed to assess the effect of career counseling on employee performance in Murang'a Water and Sanitation Company Limited.

B. Theoretical Literature Review

A theoretical review identifies the key variables that influence the phenomenon under study and emphasizes the need of considering the impact of these variables under different circumstances (Swanson, 2013).

Theories are designed to clarify, predict and assist in the interpretation of phenomena and, in many cases, question and broaden existing knowledge within the limits of essential boundary assumptions (David, 2009). This study was anchored on the Trait and Factor Theory.

C. Trait and Factor theory

Frank Parsons developed this talent matching theory in 1909. This theory focuses on the individual's evaluation and the choice of employment or occupation. Sharf (1997) describes trait as an individual attribute that can be evaluated by testing while factor as the characteristic needed for good job results. Parsons notes that when employees have an understanding of their traits, skills, and desires and as well as an understanding of employment and the labor market, workplace decision-making takes place. Zunka (1990) added that this principle includes matching an individual's attributes, skills, accomplishments, beliefs, interests, and personality with the specifications. Individual wants and values can only be completely realized when they are paired with professions that are relevant to their needs and values, according to (Parsons, 2009).

To better illustrate his viewpoints, Parsons recommended the following essential stages that an individual should take while attempting to choose a career: A clear understanding of himself, his abilities, aptitudes, and ambitions, resources, constraints, and their causes, as well as a thorough understanding of the demand opportunities in many occupations. A thorough analysis of the relationship between the above factors as well as the selection of a good fit. As a result, according to this idea, if an individual's personality is closely monitored, stronger predictions regarding his career conduct can be formed. This theory works on the assumption that both human abilities and traits needed in specific jobs can be calculated (Chartrand, 1991). It also means that individuals should be aligned with a profession that is a good match.

Rounds and Tracey (1990) say that employees work best and their productivity is highest when they are in jobs best suited to their skills. Parsons developed the idea that an ideal job is based on the combination of personal characteristics such as talents, beliefs, and personality with work variables such as pay and work climate (James and Gilliland, 2002). The better the fit, the higher the work satisfaction and success of an employee.

Giobbi (2018) states that this idea is specifically connected to career counseling as it encourages client support and guidance to help them respond to change. Over time, the priorities of individual workers shift and the position of a counselor comes in to help them choose from the job options available.

Frank Parsons (2019) added that the counselor can assist clients to consider their talents, personalities, and beliefs and then take them through assessments to help them develop self-knowledge. Parsons indicated that a reasonable decision could be made on the best match between the two for a given person if self-awareness was combined with knowledge about work. One of the biggest obstacles to this strategy, then and now, is how people and jobs can be better described. Most of the counseling initiative is directed at

offering objective self-awareness and career information to clients.

IV. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Research to assess the career guidance program in vocational high school was conducted by Martaningsih (2018). Data was gathered using surveys, interviews, and literature studies. The results of the study showed that the assessment of the program was not adequately implemented and therefore input for progress was not received. Reports from the results of the study revealed that those in charge of the career guidance program had a difference in knowing the assessment instruments.

The study also revealed the need for institutions to make plans to review career guidance services, introduce and collect periodic input from assessment outcomes for progress. An empirical study conducted by Chan (2011) on the effectiveness of workplace counseling in improving the wellbeing and performance of employees found that the intervention helps employees to manage workplace stress, depression, and burnout. The study indicated that counseling leads to reduced absenteeism and improved performance. Employees were satisfied with the counseling sessions offered both personally and professionally. This study agrees with the research work of McLeod (2010) which found out that workplace counseling reduces sickness absences by 50% which then demonstrates the cost-effective nature of counseling and its impact on overall performance. Parker et al. (2008) conducted a study to examine the impact of career coaching on MBA students. Participants were assessed six months later, and qualitative evaluations showed the benefits of career-related peer coaching as enhanced trust, increased self-image accuracy, change management success, and support for professional objectives.

These results support an empirical study conducted by Verbruggen and Sels (2008) that found that career coaching improves customer self-awareness, adaptability, and self-direction. Research to examine the impact of employee counseling services on work performance in the Kenya Police Service was conducted by (Frankline, 2012). The results showed promising results of work success depend on counseling services. The results also showed that counseling services impact the staff's work morale and interpersonal relationships. Ombayo, Otuya and Shiamwama (2013) conducted a study to examine the relationship between career counseling and employee productivity in sugar firms in Kakamega County. The study used a sample of 302 employees selected using 10% of the target population. Data were collected through the administration of questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that the more sugar firms neglect career counseling, the more productivity goes down. The researcher recommended that sugar firms should incorporate career counseling as an essential ingredient in their career intervention programs. This study confirms the need to research the impact of career counseling to close the productivity gap.

V. METHODOLOGY

The company’s career counseling was measured by examining whether employees were pleased with the career counseling availed at MUWASCO, role of career coaching on establishing personal goals, if the company was providing adequate information on career guidance, the impact of career guidance on personal competencies and whether the counseling services are favorable and meet the needs of all workers. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The target population of this study was 150 workers of MUWASCO. The researcher employed census sampling technique which allowed everyone in the organization to participate in the study. Data was collected through administration of questionnaires. The unit of measure adopted was a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate their response from the parameters given. Cronbach alpha was used to test validity and reliability of the study instrument with all the items scoring 0.839 which is above the recommended coefficients

of 0.70 and above. The data obtained was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 where descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. Descriptive statistics were presented in their relative forms of means, standard deviations and percentages. Inferential statistics were presented using the regression analysis model.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The distribution of respondents must be determined based on certain demographic factors. This would ensure that the various participants in the study project are well represented. As such demographic information that was captured and analysed included: gender, age, level of education, the department working in MUWASCO and length of service in MUWASCO.

4.3.1 Response Rate

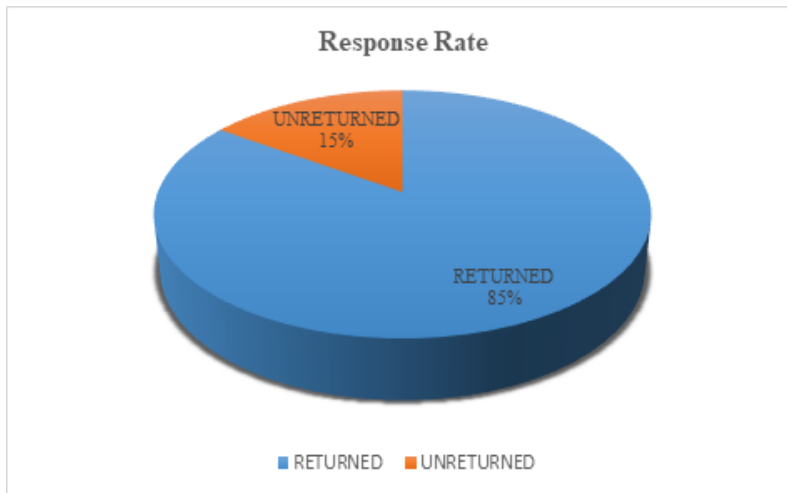


Figure 4.1: Response rate

Source: Field data (2021)

The study sought 150 participants, out of which 127 completed and submitted the questionnaires for analysis, resulting in 85% response rate. This response rate is within the guidelines of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003), which state that a response rate of at least 50% in social science research is practical to meet research analysis thus acceptable. This response rate indicates that the researcher collected adequate data to proceed to analysis.

4.3.2 Department of the Respondents

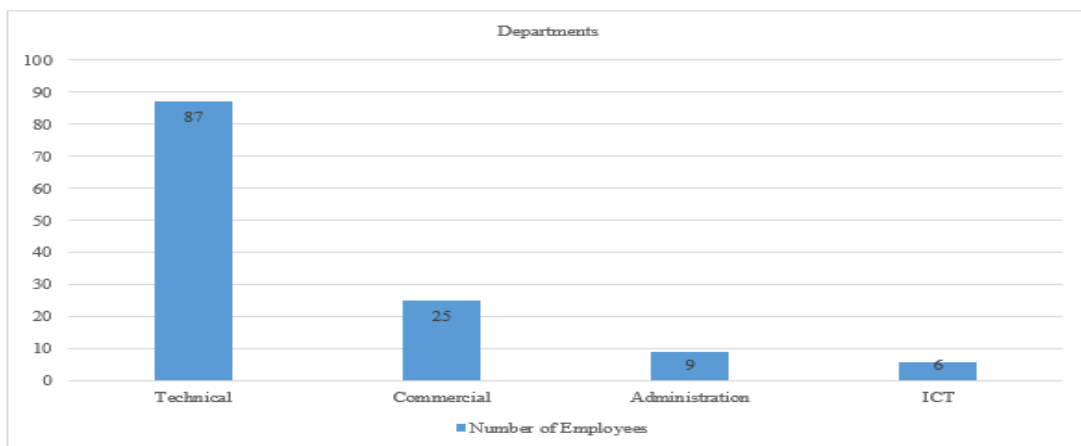


Figure 4.2: Distribution of respondents within the organization

Source: Field data (2021)

The study sought to determine the distribution of the workers in the four departments in MUWASCO. The research found that vast majority (87) of the respondents were in technical department considering the role of the organization, 25 were in commercial department, 9 were in administration department while, 6 were in ICT department.

4.3.3 Gender of the Respondents

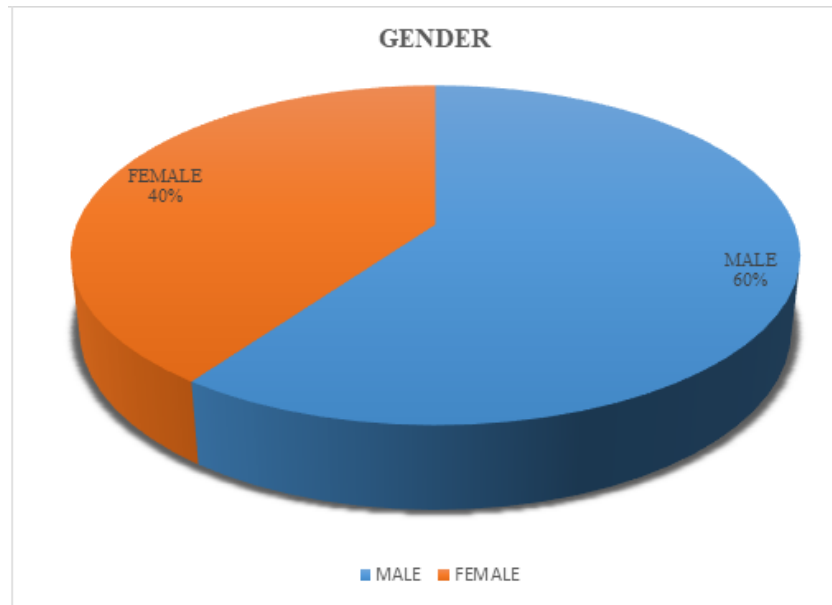


Figure 4.3: Gender of respondents

Source: Field data (2021)

The study sought to determine the gender distribution among MUWASCO employees. According to the percentages, the majority of respondents were male, with 60% being male and 40% being female. This demonstrates that the organization employs more men than women.

4.3.4 Age Category

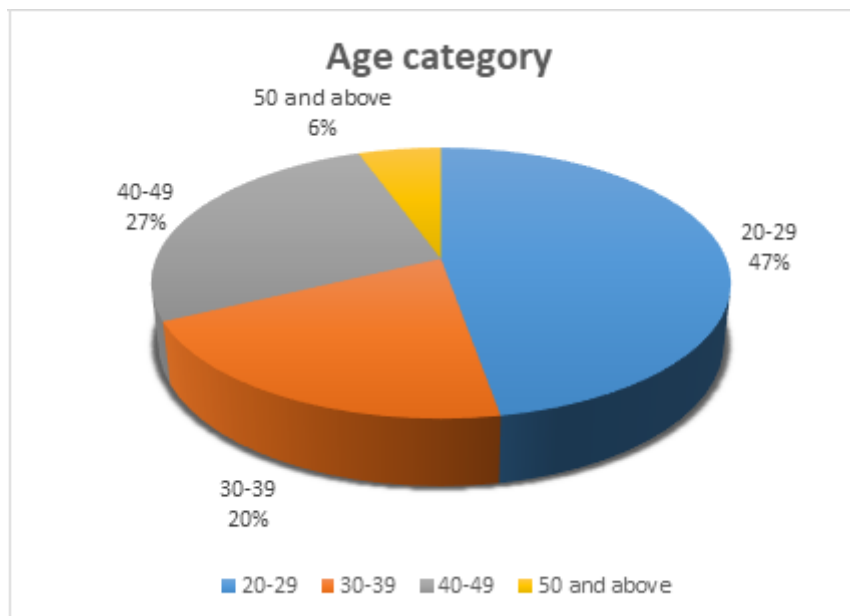


Figure 4.4: Distribution of age categories

Source: Field data (2021)

The study sought to determine the age of the population under study. The statistics show that most of the respondents were between the ages of 20 and 29 as represented by 47% with only a very small percentage of 6 % who were 50 years and above. Those between 30-39 years were 20% while those who were 40-49 years were 27%.

4.3.5 Education Level

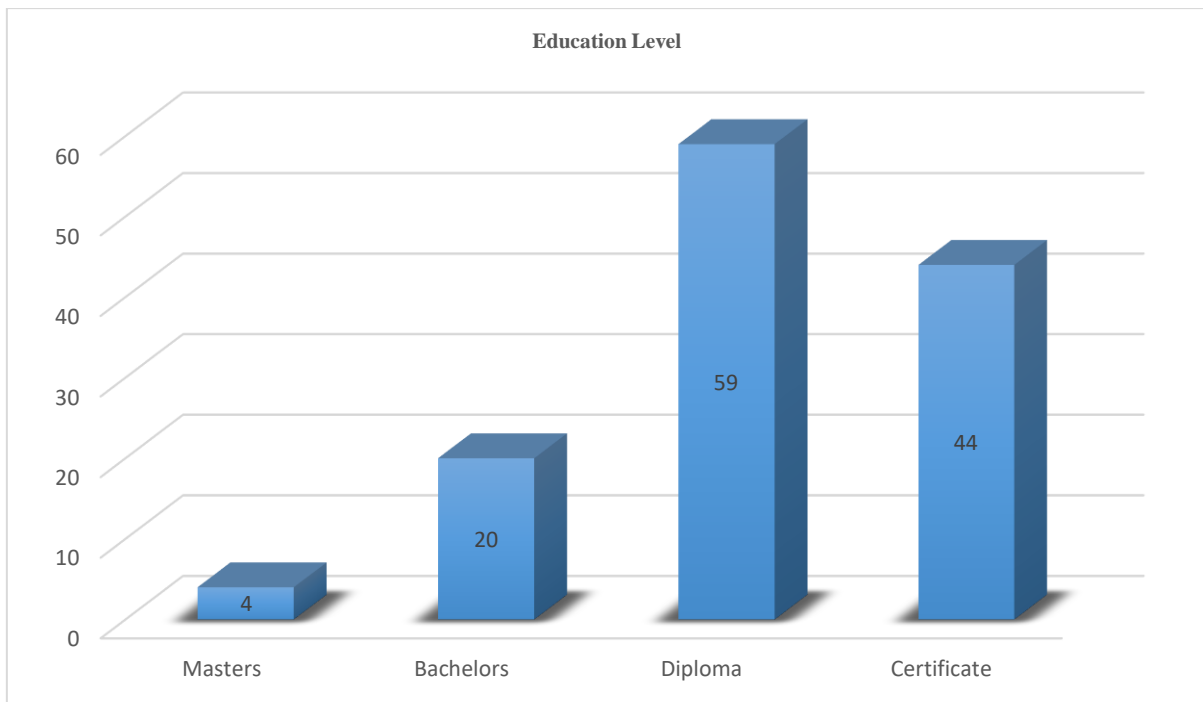


Figure 4.5: Literacy level of respondents

Source: Field data (2021)

The research sought to examine the academic qualifications of the respondents. From the results, a vast majority of the respondents had gone up to the diploma level (46.45%), followed by certificate level 34.65% with (15.75%) having bachelor's degree. Only 3.15% of the targeted population had attained the Master's degree. The respondents were adequately informed to understand the concepts of career development and employee performance. Therefore, execution would go as planned if level of education was something to go by.

4.3.6 Length of Service in MUWASCO

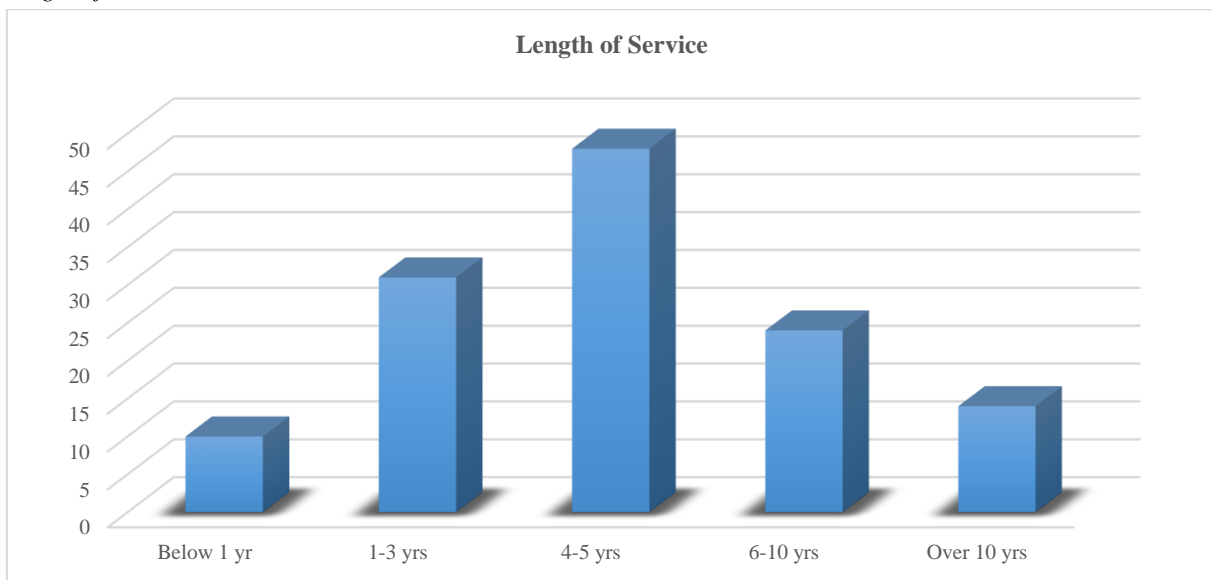


Figure 4.6: Period of working in MUWASCO

Source: Field data (2021)

The study sought to determine the period the worker has been in MUWASCO. Findings revealed that, majority of the workers as represented by 37.80% had been working in MUWASCO for a period of 4 to 5 years indicating that they had spent enough time in the organization to respond to career development practices. 24.41% had worked between 1 and 3 years, 18.90% between 6 and 10 years, 11.02% over 10 years while those who had worked for less than a year were 7.87%.

4.3.7 Work Experience

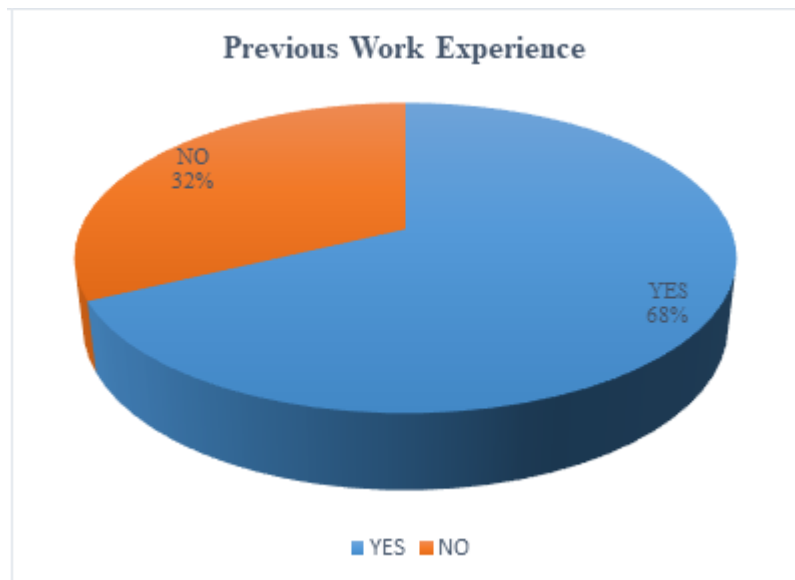


Figure 4.7: Previous work experience of the respondents

Source: Field data (2021)

Results indicated that 68% of the respondents had previous work experience before joining MUWASCO while 32% had joined MUWASCO as their first employer.

Table 1: Statements on Career Counselling and Employee Performance

Parameters	f					f x	\bar{X}	d'	Percentage Level (%)		
	1	2	3	4	5				Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I am pleased with the available career coaching at MUWASCO.	68	39	7	6	7	226	1.7795	4.84406	84.25	5.51	10.24
Career coaching has helped me define my personal goals and prepare my career plans.	72	37	6	5	7	219	1.7244	4.13324	85.83	4.72	9.45
MUWASCO avails adequate information to employees on career guidance.	70	38	8	5	6	220	1.7323	4.19325	85.04	5.51	8.66
The career guidance in MUWASCO has enhanced my competencies.	69	38	7	7	6	219	1.7244	4.13324	84.25	5.51	10.24
The counselling services provided at MUWASCO meet the needs of both male and female workers.	73	35	6	5	8	221	1.7402	4.39324	85.04	4.72	10.24
UWASCO has organized counseling services favorable to all workers.	71	36	7	7	6	222	1.7480	4.42325	84.25	5.51	10.24
Career counselling practices have increased my commitment	72	34	8	9	6	220	1.7323	4.19325	85.04	5.51	8.66
Total						12.1811	30.31353	593.703	36.99	67.73	
Aggregate Mean						1.74016	4.330533	84.82	5.28	9.6757	

The employees of MUWASCO were asked to specify their agreement levels on various statements on the effect of career counselling practices on employee performance. With a mean of 1.7795 (SD =4.84406) the workers agreed they were pleased with the career coaching availed in the organization. These results are consistent with the work of Parker et al., (2008) who mentioned the benefits of career-related peer coaching as enhanced trust, increased self-image accuracy, change management success, and support for professional objectives. They also indicated that career

coaching has helped them define their personal goals and prepare their career plans. This is shown by a mean of 1.7244 and (SD= 4.13324). These results concur with the findings of Chang (2013) who established that career coaching helps in developing career identity, analyzing strengths and weaknesses, and analyzing crucial career choices.

Career guidance is crucial in career counseling. The employees reported that the organization was providing adequate information on career guidance. This is shown by a mean of 1.7323 and (SD= 4.19325). These findings support the work of Nurihsan (2006) who indicated that career guidance encourages individual staff to make the best choices and make full use of their potential. They also agreed that the career guidance offered has enhanced their competencies with a mean of 1.7244 and (SD= 4.13324). The study findings are concur with the results of Fitzpatrick, Monda and Wooding (2016) who established that career guidance offers direction, preparation capacity, decision-making adequacy, career readiness, and career maturity. The employees agreed with a mean of 1.7402 and (SD= 4.39324) that the counselling services provided met the needs of both male and female workers. This is in support of Musyimi (2020) who established that counselling services mitigate organizational behaviors such as frustration, absenteeism, aggression, drug abuse, and job disputes that impair organizational effectiveness and affect employee efficiency. Further, they also reported that the organization had put in place favourable counselling programs to all workers. This

is shown by a mean of 1.7480 and (SD= 4.42325). Studies done by Rajin (2012) and Frankline (2012) echoed the importance of proper implementation of the counseling programs an indication that they have a significant influence on morale, job efficiency and interpersonal relationships. In addition, the employees agreed that the career counselling practices adopted by the organization have positively contributed to their performance through improved commitment and productivity. This was shown by a mean of 1.7323 and (SD=4.19325). These findings echo the previous work of Chan (2011) who found that workplace counseling helps employees to manage workplace stress, depression, and burnout. This study also supports the work of Ombayo, Otuya and Shiamwama (2013) who established that when career counselling is neglected, productivity goes therefore it should be incorporated as an important element in an organization's career intervention programs. The implication of the results is that employee performance in MUWASCO is influence by career counselling. It is probable that increased career counselling will enhance the efficiency of workers. The findings also indicate that career counselling is a significant element in career development.

Table 2: Model Summary for Career Counselling

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.086 ^a	.740	.7347	1.15043

a. Predictors: (Constant), Career Counselling

Table 2 shows that R and R² for the fitted model are 0.086 and 0.741, respectively. In MUWASCO, the R-value of 0.086 indicated a positive linear relationship between career counseling and employee performance. The R² value of 0.741 implied that 74.1% of the variation in employee performance was explained by the model $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_3 X_3$.

Table 3: ANOVA for Career Counselling

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	12.543	6	2.0905	2.481	.0469 ^b
Residual	131.527	121	1.0870		
Total	144.07	127			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Career Counselling

An ANOVA was performed, and the F statistic p-value was found to be 0.0469. Because the p-value of the F- statistic was greater than 0.05, it implied that, considering the simple regression model fitted above fitted, career counselling had a significant influence on employee performance at MUWASCO.

Table 4: Coefficients for Career Counselling

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized		T	Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	3.298	.318	0		10.291	.000
Career Coaching	.462	.052	.372		2.832	.00438
Career Guidance	.383	.064	.053		0.538	.00203
Counselling Programs	.292	.128	.101		1.016	.00314

As shown in Table 4, the coefficients to the model $Y = 3.298 + 0.462X_1 + 0.383X_2 + 0.292X_3$ indicate that career counselling is statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This was due to the fact that the p-value of 0.469 was less than 0.05. The constant term implied that at zero consideration of career counselling, employee performance would be 3.298; increasing career counselling would increase employee performance by 0.085.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The workers reported that the counseling services availed were favorable and met their needs. However, the workers also reported that they were not pleased with the career coaching availed and there was no adequate information on career guidance. From the analysis it was established that majority of the workers were in agreement that career counseling has significant impact on their performance. This was supported by a positive and significant relationship between career counseling and employee performance. This study therefore concluded that the organization had failed to effectively implement career counseling hence the performance gap. From the above analysis, the researcher recommends that the organization under study should formulate a clear policy on career coaching to help workers define their personal goals, prepare their career plans and address their needs. The study also suggests provision of adequate information on career guidance and a career guidance policy directed at enhancing the competencies of workers.

AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

From the findings, it was established that career counseling plays a significant role on employee performance which is then reflected in the overall performance of the organization. In this regard, there is need to conduct thorough research on career coaching, career guidance and counseling programs. A study in line with this topic can be done on a wider range covering more organizations and a comparison done to uncover the best practise that can be used to ensure enhanced employee performance within the private and public sector.

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