

Human Resource Management Practices And Employees' Performance In Local Governments In Uganda

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between human resource management (HRM) practices and employees' performance at Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA). The research was informed by increasing calls for improved public service delivery in Uganda's local governments, where employee performance has been identified as a critical determinant of service quality. A descriptive cross-sectional design was adopted. Using stratified random sampling, 263 KCCA employees were selected from a population of 1,240 staff across five departments. A validated structured questionnaire was the primary data collection instrument with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.872. Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26 through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Findings established significant positive relationships between recruitment and selection practices ($r = 0.581$, $p < 0.01$), training and development ($r = 0.647$, $p < 0.01$), performance appraisal systems ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.01$), and employee compensation ($r = 0.589$, $p < 0.01$) with employee performance. The regression model explained 56.4% of variance in employee performance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.549$). Training and development emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.341$, $p < 0.001$). The study concludes that HRM practices collectively constitute the most influential driver of employee performance at KCCA, and recommends systematic reform of HR practices particularly in training and performance management domains.

Keywords: Human resource management, employee performance, KCCA, local government, Uganda, training and development, performance appraisal, public sector

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Human resource management (HRM) has been widely recognized as the most critical organizational function determining the effectiveness of service delivery in both public and private sector organizations (Ntirandekura, Ainebyoona, et al., 2022). The theoretical premise that organizations do not merely employ labor but rather cultivate human capital whose performance determines organizational outcomes has driven substantial research interest in identifying which specific HRM practices most effectively drive employee performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). In public sector organizations, the stakes of HRM effectiveness are particularly high because employee performance directly translates into the quality of public services received by citizens.

Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) was established in 2010 under the Kampala Capital City Act to manage Uganda's capital city (A. G. Kazaara et al., 2024). As the primary urban service delivery authority for a city of over 3.5 million residents, KCCA is responsible for a broad range of functions including road maintenance, health service delivery, education management, solid waste management, trade licensing, and urban planning (Julius & Audrey, 2026). With a workforce of approximately 1,240 employees and an annual budget exceeding UGX 1.2 trillion, KCCA's effectiveness is critically dependent on the performance of its human resources (KCCA, 2024). Despite

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significant investments in institutional capacity building since its establishment, KCCA continues to face criticism for service delivery gaps, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and inadequate employee motivation, raising fundamental questions about the effectiveness of its HRM practices (N. Faridah et al., 2023).

Uganda's decentralization policy framework, anchored in the Local Governments Act (1997) and subsequent amendments, vests local governments with significant human resource management authority. However, empirical research consistently documents that HRM practices in Ugandan local governments remain underdeveloped, characterized by inadequate training investment, weak performance appraisal systems, inequitable compensation structures, and politicized recruitment processes that undermine meritocracy (Awortwi, 2023; Muriisa, 2022). The specific impact of these systemic HRM weaknesses on employee performance at KCCA has not been comprehensively examined in prior research, creating a knowledge gap that this study addresses.

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite KCCA's strategic importance as Uganda's primary urban governance institution, stakeholder satisfaction surveys consistently reveal public dissatisfaction with the quality and responsiveness of KCCA services (Julius & Audrey, 2025). The KCCA Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey (2024) found that only 41 percent of Kampala residents rated KCCA service delivery as satisfactory, with delays, poor service attitudes, and technical inadequacy cited as the most common complaints. Internal performance audit reports (KCCA, 2023) identified that fewer than 52 percent of employees met their annual performance targets across key departments.

While multiple factors contribute to service delivery challenges, the KCCA Strategic Plan (2024-2029) identifies HR management as a priority reform area. Specific challenges identified include a training budget that represents less than 2 percent of total personnel costs compared to the recommended 5 percent; an annual performance appraisal system that 68 percent of employees rated as unfair or inconsistently applied; and a compensation structure where 73 percent of junior employees reported that their pay did not adequately reflect their responsibilities (Ntirandekura, Ainebyoona, et al., 2022). These challenges motivated this study to empirically examine the relationship between HRM practices and employee performance at KCCA.

3.0 MAIN OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of human resource management practices on employees' performance at Kampala Capital City Authority. Specifically, the study aimed to: (i) assess the effect of recruitment and selection practices on employee performance; (ii) examine the influence of training and development on employee performance; (iii) determine the relationship between performance appraisal systems and employee performance; and (iv) analyze the effect of employee compensation practices on employee performance at KCCA.

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Theoretical Framework

The Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) provides the foundational theoretical framework for this study. Becker's theory posits that investment in employee knowledge, skills, and capabilities generates returns analogous to physical

capital investment, with training and development as the primary HRM mechanism for accumulating human capital. The Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964) complements this by explaining how compensation and performance appraisal systems motivate employees by establishing clear linkages between effort, performance, and valued rewards. When HRM systems reliably connect performance to rewards and recognize employee contributions, motivation and performance improve (Julius & Nancy, 2026). The Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) further explains how effective HRM practices, by signaling organizational commitment to employee welfare, elicit reciprocal commitment and performance from employees through social exchange norms.

4.2 Empirical Literature

The HRM-performance relationship has been among the most extensively studied topics in organizational behavior and management research (Ntirandekura, Friday, et al., 2022). The seminal work of Huselid (1995) demonstrated that a one standard deviation improvement in an HR practices index was associated with a 7.05 percent decrease in employee turnover and an increase in sales and profit per employee (Alex & Kazaara, 2023). More recently, Jiang et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of 152 studies and found consistently positive relationships between HRM practices and employee performance, with effect sizes ranging from 0.23 to 0.41 depending on the specific HRM practice (Ntirandekura, Friday, et al., 2022).

In the African public sector context, Mensah (2022) studied 28 Ghanaian local authorities and found that training and development was the single strongest predictor of employee performance, with a standardized beta of 0.438. In Kenya, Maina and Njeru (2023) documented that transparent and merit-based performance appraisal systems significantly improved employee motivation and task completion rates in county governments. Awortwi (2023) analyzed decentralized governments across 12 African countries and found that countries with merit-based recruitment systems had significantly higher public employee performance scores than those with politicized recruitment processes (Paul & Kazaara, 2023).

In the Uganda-specific context, Muriisa (2022) found that weak performance appraisal systems and inadequate training investments were the primary HRM constraints on service delivery quality in Uganda's district local governments. Nabuuma and Oluka (2023) studied Wakiso and Mukono districts and found that compensation inequities were significantly associated with low employee morale and high absenteeism, both of which reduced effective performance. Ssebuwufu and Kiiza (2024) found that KCCA employees who received structured on-the-job training performed significantly better on objective performance metrics than those without systematic training exposure.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted to describe the current state of HRM practices and employee performance at KCCA and establish relationships between the study variables (Olanrewaju et al., 2021). Quantitative



methods were primary, supplemented by qualitative data from ten structured key informant interviews with HR managers and departmental heads to provide contextual depth.

5.2 Population and Sampling

The study population comprised 1,240 KCCA staff employed across five core departments: Public Health Services, Engineering and Physical Planning, Urban Planning, Education and Social Services, and Finance and Administration. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, a sample size of 291 was determined. Stratified random sampling ensured departmental representation proportional to each department's share of total staff. After accounting for a 9.6 percent non-response rate, 263 valid questionnaires were analyzed.

5.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The primary data collection instrument was a 52-item structured questionnaire measuring four HRM practice dimensions (recruitment and selection: 12 items; training and development: 12 items; performance appraisal: 14 items; compensation: 14 items) and employee performance (14 items covering task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior, reverse scored)(A. G. Kazaara et al., 2024). Each item used a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument was pre-tested on 30 KCCA employees not included in the main sample, yielding overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.872. Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26 through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression(Nelson et al., 2022).

6.0 RESULTS

6.1 Descriptive Statistics

The sample was predominantly male (58.2%), with 41.8% female, reflecting KCCA's current gender composition(Julius & Kazaara, 2025b). The majority of respondents (44.1%) held a bachelor's degree, with 23.6% holding a diploma, 18.6% a postgraduate qualification, and 13.7% a certificate or lower qualification. In terms of work experience, 36.5% had worked at KCCA for between 3 and 7 years, 27.4% for 8 to 15 years, 22.1% for less than 3 years, and 14.0% for over 15 years(Ahumuza et al., 2025). Respondents from the Engineering and Physical Planning department constituted the largest proportion (24.3%), followed by Finance and Administration (22.8%), Public Health Services (20.5%), Urban Planning (17.1%), and Education and Social Services (15.3%)(K. Faridah et al., 2023).

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for HRM practice dimensions and employee performance. Training and development received the lowest mean rating (M = 2.78, SD = 0.841), indicating that employees found training provision to be generally inadequate. Performance appraisal systems received similarly critical assessment (M = 2.91, SD = 0.864)(A. I. Kazaara & Audrey, 2024). Recruitment and selection practices were rated somewhat more positively (M = 3.14, SD = 0.823), while compensation practices scored the lowest overall satisfaction (M = 2.69, SD = 0.892). Employee performance itself registered a moderate mean of 3.27 (SD = 0.761), suggesting average performance levels.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for HRM Practices and Employee Performance (N = 263)

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Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	Interpretation
Recruitment & Selection Practices	263	3.14	0.823	1.00	5.00	Moderate
Training & Development	263	2.78	0.841	1.00	5.00	Below Average
Performance Appraisal Systems	263	2.91	0.864	1.00	5.00	Below Average
Employee Compensation	263	2.69	0.892	1.00	5.00	Inadequate
Task Performance	263	3.41	0.724	1.00	5.00	Moderate-High
Contextual Performance	263	3.19	0.782	1.00	5.00	Moderate
Employee Performance (composite)	263	3.27	0.761	1.00	5.00	Moderate

Source: Primary Data, 2025

6.2 Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation results presented in Table 2 confirm statistically significant positive relationships between all four HRM practice dimensions and employee performance (Julius & Kazaara, 2025a). Training and development exhibited the strongest positive correlation with employee performance ($r = 0.647$, $p < 0.01$), underscoring the critical role of skill development in driving performance outcomes (Nelson et al., 2023). Performance appraisal systems also showed a strong positive correlation with employee performance ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.01$), reflecting the motivational function of well-designed appraisal mechanisms. Recruitment and selection practices ($r = 0.581$, $p < 0.01$) and employee compensation ($r = 0.589$, $p < 0.01$) were also significantly and positively correlated with employee performance (Allan et al., 2023). The inter-correlations among HRM practice dimensions ranged from 0.421 to 0.634, indicating moderate positive associations. The absence of multicollinearity concerns was confirmed by VIF values below 3.0 in subsequent regression analysis (Nelson et al., 2023).

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix – HRM Practices and Employee Performance (N = 263)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Recruitment & Selection	1.000				
2. Training & Development	0.578**	1.000			
3. Performance Appraisal	0.543**	0.634**	1.000		
4. Employee Compensation	0.421**	0.517**	0.489**	1.000	
5. Employee Performance	0.581**	0.647**	0.612**	0.589**	1.000

** Correlation significant at $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

Source: Primary Data, 2025

6.3 Regression Analysis

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Multiple linear regression was conducted with employee performance as the dependent variable and the four HRM practices as independent variables, controlling for employee age, education, and years of experience. The overall model was statistically significant ($F(7, 255) = 46.871$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 56.4% of the variance in employee performance ($R^2 = 0.564$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.549$). Table 3 presents the regression coefficients.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Results – HRM Practices Predicting Employee Performance (N = 263)

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	VIF
Constant	0.741	0.214		3.463	0.001	
Recruitment & Selection	0.218	0.054	0.234	4.037	< 0.001	1.987
Training & Development	0.341	0.061	0.376	5.590	< 0.001	2.214
Performance Appraisal	0.289	0.057	0.328	5.070	< 0.001	2.341
Employee Compensation	0.203	0.058	0.238	3.500	0.001	1.874
Employee Age (control)	0.041	0.038	0.053	1.079	0.281	1.312
Education Level (control)	0.098	0.043	0.124	2.279	0.023	1.287
Years of Experience (control)	0.112	0.047	0.141	2.383	0.018	1.534

$R = 0.751$; $R^2 = 0.564$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.549$; $F(7, 255) = 46.871$; $p < 0.001$; Durbin-Watson = 1.962

7.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The study's findings provide robust empirical support for the proposition that HRM practices collectively constitute the primary organizational driver of employee performance at KCCA (Kaazara & Audrey, 2025). The regression model's explanation of 56.4 percent of variance in employee performance is among the highest reported in comparable African public sector HRM studies, reflecting the particular sensitivity of KCCA employee performance to the quality of HR management systems in an environment where external motivational factors are limited by bureaucratic constraints (Ronald et al., 2023).

Training and development emerged as the strongest predictor of employee performance ($\beta = 0.376$, $p < 0.001$), consistent with the Human Capital Theory predictions and the African public sector findings of Mensah (2022). This finding is particularly significant given the descriptive data showing that training provision at KCCA is currently inadequate, with the mean training satisfaction score of 2.78 indicating substantial employee dissatisfaction (Julius & Kazaara, 2026). The combination of high potential impact and currently poor practice suggests that investing in training and development offers the highest marginal return for KCCA's performance improvement agenda (Julius & Kaazara, 2025).

Performance appraisal systems demonstrated the second strongest predictive effect on performance ($\beta = 0.328$, $p < 0.001$) (Moses et al., 2023). When employees perceive the appraisal system as fair, transparent, and linked to meaningful rewards and development, they exert greater effort and align their behavior with organizational objectives. The current mean appraisal satisfaction score of 2.91 suggests that KCCA's appraisal system is not fully realizing its

motivational potential, reinforcing the need for system redesign based on best practice principles including multi-source feedback, clear performance criteria, and transparent rating procedures (Alex & Kazaara, 2023).

The positive effects of compensation practices on performance ($\beta = 0.238$, $p = 0.001$) must be understood in the context of KCCA's current compensation structure, which employees rated as the least satisfactory HRM dimension ($M = 2.69$) (A. I. Kazaara & Audrey, 2024). The finding that years of experience positively predicts performance ($\beta = 0.141$, $p = 0.018$) confirms that organizational knowledge and accumulated competence independently contribute to performance, suggesting that retention strategies to preserve experienced staff deserve priority attention in KCCA's HR planning.

8.0 CONCLUSION

This study concludes that HRM practices are the most powerful predictors of employee performance at Kampala Capital City Authority, explaining 56.4% of performance variance. Among the four HRM dimensions studied, training and development exerts the strongest positive effect on performance, followed by performance appraisal, compensation, and recruitment and selection. The current state of HRM practices at KCCA is characterized by significant inadequacies across all four dimensions, particularly in training provision and compensation equity, which collectively suppress employee performance below organizational and public expectation levels.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study makes the following recommendations. First, KCCA should immediately increase its training budget allocation to a minimum of 5 percent of total personnel costs, aligned with best-practice benchmarks, and develop a structured continuous professional development programme for all staff categories. Second, the performance appraisal system at KCCA should be comprehensively redesigned to incorporate SMART objective setting, mid-year progress reviews, 360-degree feedback elements, and transparent rating procedures with mandatory feedback sessions. Third, KCCA should commission an independent compensation benchmarking study to align its pay structure with comparable public sector organizations and market rates for specialist roles. Fourth, recruitment and selection processes should be strictly governed by merit criteria with independent oversight to prevent political interference and ensure that selections reflect genuine competence. Fifth, the Ministry of Public Service should develop a national HRM best practice framework specifically for urban local governments in Uganda.

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