

Effect of Talent Calibration on Organizational Performance of Murang'a County Government, Kenya

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Abstract

Despite the significant investments made by the Murang'a County Government's leadership in automating HRM processes, low staff training remains a challenge due to budgetary constraints. According to a report by Murang'a County Government. To determine the effect of talent calibration on organizational performance of Murang'a County Government, Kenya. The study's main theory was Human Capital Theory (HCT). A descriptive research design was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The study targeted senior and middle-level management from the 11 departments of Murang'a County Government. They included 11 CECs, 11 chief officers, 26 directors, 38 administrators, and 55 human resource officers. The census method was adopted because the population in question was relatively small to be sampled. Interview guides and structured questionnaires were the main data-collection instruments for the study. This study conducted a pre-test in Nairobi County Government. The study assessed content validity and Cronbach's alpha to test reliability. The analysis of questionnaire data was conducted using SPSS version 23 to generate descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were among the descriptive statistics examined. The study examined linear regression, including model summary, analysis of variance, and regression weights. In analyzing interview responses, the study used a thematic approach. The study concluded that talent calibration played a significant role in the performance of organizations within the Murang'a County Government. According to the findings of the study, there existed a significant effect between talent assessments, talent reviews, competency evaluations, and provision of learning and training that met employees' needs on one hand, and increased productivity, accountability, and improved service delivery among employees on the other hand. The human resource department needs to put in place an official succession planning mechanism to ensure continuity and prevent the loss of organizational knowledge. It is critical for high-potential staff members to be identified earlier on and for mechanisms to be put in place to develop their careers through mentoring and leadership training programs.

Keywords: *Talent Calibration, Organizational Performance, Murang'a County Government, Kenya*

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1. Introduction

Talent calibration is a process that is used by management to make decisions by involving HRM members through alignment of staff performance across institutional departments (Díaz-Fernández, 2023). This process enhances the chances of matching highly qualified staff with specific roles through assessing their talents as they work, guided by competency frameworks. This means that through the talent review cycle, management and HRM professionals are able to distinguish the potential of each staff member, warranting development planning initiatives or supporting the succession of older staff by younger employees (International Social Security Association [ISSA], 2025).

United States indicated that organizational performance has been enhanced through the application of talent calibration practices. According to a report by Reflektive (2025), calibration practices were found to have increased performance ratings by 63% in America, underscoring their relevance in HRM. Additionally, HRM in the public service of Serbia has developed a comprehensive competency framework and tools to ensure that the HRM implementation process is carried out consistently (Integrated Human Resources Management in Public Administration of the Republic of Serbia, 2025).

Regionally, public services in nations such as South Africa have implemented various HR-integrated systems that protect the integrity of employee records and application tracking. This has led to an increased tendency for the HRM department to conduct frequent audit reviews, particularly of recruitment process outcomes. However, Nzimande et al. (2025) noted low capacity among most public organizations, limiting the full modernization of HRM functions, such as regular performance reviews. Public organizations in Tanzania, East Africa, have adopted a centralized Human Resource Integration System (HRIS) that supports real-time calibration of HR metrics across government ministries (Kauzeni et al., 2025).

Locally, the public service has improved HRM by incorporating HR policies into the Staff Performance Appraisal System (SPAS), a structure that guides employees on target setting, obtaining feedback, and participating in review cycles in government-established organizations (Public Service Commission (PSC), 2023). That notwithstanding, political influence remains the greatest challenge for providing accurate reviews of employees who have been performing poorly. In Human Resource Management (HRM), talent calibration practices play an important role in ensuring fairness in the performance evaluation process for staff. According to Bol et al. (2025), HRM policies and systems are implemented effectively with the support of calibration. Therefore, calibration practices enable organizations to attain the desired employee satisfaction and consistency rates through the manner in which their roles are evaluated.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite the significant investments made by the Murang'a County Government's leadership in automating HRM processes, low staff training remains a challenge due to budgetary constraints. According to a report by Murang'a County Government (2025a), only 46% of the target of 100% of staff in the Murang'a County Government were able to undergo mandatory training in 2025/2026, undermining the morale of the majority of the staff and organizational cohesion. Budgetary constraints limiting training in HRM in the county government have limited overall calibration of employee support systems, leading to some departments benefiting more than others, even in terms of salaries and remuneration. For instance, in the financial year 2024/2025, the county government spent Kshs 1.7 billion (24%) of its recurrent expenditure to make payments to staff in different cadres, with the executive absorbing half of the budget, within a period of just nine months (Muranga County Government, 2025b).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

To determine the effect of talent calibration on organizational performance of Murang'a County Government, Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀1: Talent calibration has no significant effect on organizational performance of Murang'a County Government, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Human Capital Theory (HCT) was developed by Schultz (1961) and has since been improved by scholars such as Becker (1964) and Mincer (1974). Human capital theory informed the talent calibration and stated that people gain value when they invest in themselves through access to higher education, skills, exposure, and experience. According to Becker (1964), the ability to invest in human resources within an organization increases the likelihood that employees will make informed decisions, become accountable for their actions, and develop proactivity in response to market changes. Therefore, investments in human resources were considered motivators for advancing their thinking to support shifts in county governments. HCT informed talent calibration through ascertaining that employees were accurately assessed, fairly compared, and strategically placed based on their competencies and performance potential (Bol et al., 2025). The effectiveness of talent calibration helped identify high performers, address skill gaps, and align human capital with organizational goals, thereby improving overall organizational performance. HCT suggested that investments made in employees of the county governments enabled them to become more productive and relevant in a changing market (Demirgüneş et al., 2024).

2.2 Empirical Review

Brahimaj et al. (2025) explored how Kosovo's service and commercial enterprises performed as a result of talent management. A quantitative method was used to sample 70 respondents using structured questionnaires. The results of the study showed that implementing comprehensive talent management strategies was crucial for enhancing organizational performance and achieving sustained business success in competitive markets. However, Brahimaj et al. (2025) failed to explain why some employees are overlooked while others are overrated.

Igwe et al. (2025) explored how Nigeria's manufacturing firms performed as a result of talent management. A cross-sectional design was used to gather information from 123 workers via structured questionnaires. The study found that management in these firms regularly held meetings with employees to help track performance by evaluating it. Nevertheless, Igwe et al. (2025) did not explain how having a supportive and engaging work environment helped retain top talent.

Mungania et al. (2024) examined how the Isiolo County Government performed as a result of employee evaluations. A descriptive research design was used to gather information from 260 employees through questionnaires. The study found that, instead of all departments using their own standards, managers met and agreed on which aspects to check to assess good performance. However, Mungania et al. (2024) did not explain how lack of resources was a major issue in the evaluation process.

3. Methodology

A descriptive research design was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The study targeted senior and middle-level management from the 11 departments of Murang'a County Government. They included 11 CECs, 11 chief officers, 26 directors, 38 administrators, and 55 human resource officers. The census method was adopted because the population in question was relatively small to be sampled. Interview guides and structured questionnaires were the main data-collection instruments for the study. This study conducted a pre-test in Nairobi County Government. The study assessed content validity and Cronbach's alpha to test reliability. The analysis of questionnaire data was conducted using SPSS version 23 to generate descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were among the descriptive statistics examined. Linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive power of talent calibration on organizational performance. In analyzing interview responses, the study used a thematic approach.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

The study sampled 11 CECs, 11 chief officers, 26 directors, 38 administrators, and 55 Human Resource officers. Table 1 presents the results.

Table 1: Response Rate

Tools used	Respondents	Sampled	Response	Percentage (%)
Interview guide	CECs	11	7	64
	Chief Officers	11	8	73
Questionnaire	Directors	26	21	81
	Administrators	38	35	92
	Human Resource Officer	55	47	85
	Total	141	118	84

According to Table 1, 7(64%) CECs, 8(73%) chief officers, 21(81%) directors, 35 (92%) administrators, and 47(85%) human resource officers responded to the study. The average response rate was 84%, with a total of 118 respondents participating in the study. The high response rate meant that the respondents' perspectives on talent calibration, compensation calibration, process calibration, and rating calibration represented the views of crucial managers and HR practitioners in Murang'a County Government.

4.2 Reliability Results

Before the primary data collection, a pilot study was conducted in Nairobi County to assess the reliability of the research tools. Table 2 provides the Cronbach's Alpha results.

Table 2: Reliability Results

Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha
Talent Calibration	0.871
Organizational Performance	0.865
Average	0.868

As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were 0.871 for talent calibration and 0.865 for organizational performance, both exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. These results indicate that the study instruments were reliable and demonstrated high internal consistency. This finding is consistent with Setyaedhi (2024), who noted that a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient above 0.70 indicates acceptable reliability and internal consistency.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Talent Calibration

This section examined the effect of talent calibration on the organizational performance of Murang'a County Government, Kenya. The indicators measured were: talent cycle, staff development planning, competency frameworks, talent assessment, and succession planning. The tables used a Likert Scale in which 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Talent Calibration

Statements N=103	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
The organization regularly conducts talent review cycles	3 (2.9%)	4 (3.9%)	10 (9.7%)	35 (34.0%)	51 (49.5%)	4.23	0.982
Individual staff development plans are consistently implemented	3 (2.9%)	7 (6.8%)	12 (11.7%)	34 (33.0%)	47 (45.6%)	4.12	1.051
Competency frameworks are clearly defined	16 (15.5%)	11 (10.7%)	19 (18.4%)	42 (40.8%)	15 (14.6%)	3.28	1.287
Employees undergo regular talent assessments	2 (1.9%)	4 (3.9%)	10 (9.7%)	33 (32.0%)	54 (52.4%)	4.29	0.935
Succession planning is actively practiced to prepare future leaders.	40 (38.8%)	29 (28.2%)	16 (15.5%)	3 (2.9%)	15 (14.6%)	2.26	1.386
Training and development opportunities are aligned with talent assessments.	4 (3.9%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0%)	42 (40.8%)	56 (54.4%)	4.41	0.879
Managers provide feedback based on structured talent evaluation.	6 (5.8%)	11 (10.7%)	42 (40.8%)	23 (22.3%)	21 (20.4%)	3.41	1.106
Talent management practices enhance employee engagement and growth.	4 (3.9%)	13 (12.6%)	33 (32.0%)	22 (21.4%)	31 (30.1%)	3.61	1.157

Table 3 showed that 56 (54.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 42 (40.8%) agreed, with a mean of 4.41 and a standard deviation of 0.879, that training and development opportunities were aligned with talent assessments. Further, 54 (52.4%) strongly agreed, and 33 (32.0%) agreed, with a mean of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 0.935, that employees underwent regular talent assessments to identify strengths and gaps. Nevertheless, 40 (38.8%)

strongly disagreed, and 29 (28.2%) disagreed, with a mean of 2.26 and a standard deviation of 1.386, that succession planning was actively practiced to prepare future leaders.

From the findings, Murang'a County Government had implemented talent assessment and development practices, as respondents confirmed that the development opportunities given to employees were based on the results of talent assessment processes and that the assessments were regularly conducted to identify employees' strengths and weaknesses in terms of competencies. The implication was that the county government understood the need to develop its employees' capabilities to perform better. These findings agreed with those of Brahimaj et al. (2025), who indicated that proper talent assessment and development contribute to improved employee competence and performance.

From the interviews conducted, it was clear that the talent review process effectively identified workers with great potential and essential skills in the Murang'a County Government. Respondents mentioned that, through performance evaluations and assessments, together with consultations within departments, the county would be able to identify individuals with potential and specialized skills. This was not entirely true, since other departments did not participate in this process.

One of the respondents (KII 7) said that:

"The talent management process helped us recognize some of the employees with good performance and leadership skills, particularly in our annual performance appraisals."

Another one (KII 11) mentioned that:

"We are able to identify our talented employees, but the process is not yet standardized in all the departments, hence making it hard to recognize high potentials."

The third respondent (KII 2) said that:

"Talent reviews are quite useful when it comes to staff development, even though succession planning needs further enhancement."

These results validate the study conducted by Brahimaj et al. (2025), which revealed that an efficient talent review process enables organizations to identify and develop high-potential employees. As in Igwe et al. (2025), whose study showed that systematic talent identification is necessary for preparing leaders and increasing organizational productivity, the results are in line with Becker's (1964) Human Capital Theory.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Performance

Organizational performance was the study's dependent variable, measured using the following indicators: employee productivity, employee turnover rate, HR process efficiency, service delivery, and accountability. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Performance

Statements N=103	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Employees consistently meet or exceed their performance targets	4 (3.9%)	1 (1.0%)	84 (81.6%)	12 (11.7%)	2 (1.9%)	3.07	0.598
The organization effectively minimizes employee turnover.	5 (4.9%)	2 (1.9%)	73 (70.9%)	17 (16.5%)	6 (5.8%)	3.17	0.768
HR processes in the organization are efficient and timely.	3 (2.9%)	1 (1.0%)	76 (73.8%)	18 (17.5%)	5 (4.9%)	3.20	0.677
The County delivers services that meet community expectations.	1 (1.0%)	7 (6.8%)	54 (52.4%)	28 (27.2%)	13 (12.6%)	3.44	0.836
There are clear accountability mechanisms in place for staff actions.	1 (1.0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.0%)	65 (63.1%)	36 (35.0%)	4.31	0.595
Employees are motivated to achieve high levels of productivity.	2 (1.9%)	6 (5.8%)	3 (2.9%)	42 (40.8%)	50 (48.5%)	4.28	0.923
The organization effectively monitors and evaluates performance outcomes.	3 (2.9%)	6 (5.8%)	7 (6.8%)	33 (32.0%)	54 (52.4%)	4.25	1.038
Resources are optimally utilized to improve organizational performance.	0 (0%)	7 (6.8%)	75 (72.8%)	16 (15.5%)	5 (4.9%)	3.18	0.622

As per Table 4, the majority of the respondents, 36(35.0%), strongly agreed, and 65(63.1%) agreed, with a mean of 4.31 and a standard deviation of 0.595, that there were clear accountability mechanisms in place for staff actions. Additionally, with a mean of 4.28 and a standard deviation of 0.932, 50 (48.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed, and 42 (40.8%) agreed that employees were motivated to achieve high levels of productivity. Notably, 84 (81.6%) held a neutral opinion regarding the statement that employees consistently met or exceeded their performance targets.

The results showed that the Murang'a County Government had accountability measures in place that governed employees' behavior and responsibilities, meaning employees worked in an environment of transparency and accountability for their activities. The responses also indicated that employees were highly motivated to achieve very high productivity standards,

indicating that the organization encourages and motivates its employees to perform well in their duties. This is in line with the study by Odhiambo et al. (2025), who revealed that the effectiveness of accountability measures and the nature of the organizational environment and human resources had positive contributions to organizational performance through employee responsibility and commitment.

However, it was unclear to what extent there was alignment between employees' actual performance and the set targets, indicating weaknesses in performance monitoring, target evaluation, and feedback on performance results. This implied that, although accountability systems and motivational schemes were in place, the organization lacked effective methods to measure performance against targets. The above finding confirmed the study by Sindhuja and Dunstan (2025), which indicated that data-based performance measurement was essential for monitoring employee performance and evaluating the achievement of organizational goals. According to Tessema, Yang, and Chen (2025), organizational performance was enhanced through continual measurement of employee performance with feedback mechanisms.

The interviews found an increase in productivity over the last year due to improved performance management, employee development programs, and accountability measures. It was indicated that there had been increased efforts by employees to meet departmental objectives and improve service delivery. Productivity levels depended on each department according to available resources.

This is how one of the respondents (KII 15) commented on the matter:

"The productivity of our employees has really increased since they are aware of what they are supposed to do."

Another participant (KII 3) said:

"Employees are more committed to meeting departmental objectives, especially after implementing performance reviews."

The results were consistent with Phiri, Daka, and Phiri (2025), who stated that effective human resource management contributed to improved employee productivity. This was consistent with the findings of Aduamah (2025), who noted that employee motivation and effective human resource practices played an important role in productivity and organizational performance. The results were also in line with the views presented by Hauff (2025).

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

Simple linear regression was used in testing the null hypothesis that talent calibration has no significant impact on organizational performance within the Murang'a County Government, Kenya.

Table 5: Model Summary of Talent Calibration Practice

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.721 ^a	0.520	0.515	0.694

a. Predictors: (Constant), Talent Calibration

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

As per Table 5, talent calibration had the highest level of influence, suggesting that talent-related practices had a great influence on organizational performance. Therefore, effective talent management in a county government led to better organizational performance by improving productivity, accountability, and service delivery. This result agreed with the work of Brahimaj et al. (2025), who indicated that talent management practices played a significant role in improving organizational performance by enhancing employees' capabilities and work effectiveness. In addition, Igwe et al. (2025) showed that talent identification and development led to organizational performance and competitiveness.

Table 6: ANOVA Results of Talent Calibration

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	210.61	1	210.61	109.42	.000 ^b
	Residual	194.42	101	1.925		
	Total	405.03	102			

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Talent Calibration

As shown in Table 6, talent calibration had the greatest effect on organizational performance ($F=109$, $p=0.000$). This implied that organizational performance was enhanced through proper identification, evaluation, and development of talent amongst employees. With a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05), the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that talent calibration has a significant impact on organizational performance. Brahimaj et al. (2025) and Igwe et al. (2025) noted that talent management practices positively affected employees' skills, productivity, and the competitive advantage of the organization.

Table 7: Regression coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.287	0.231		5.571	.000
Talent Calibration	0.734	0.070	.721	10.460	.000

From Table 7, it is clear that adding one unit of talent calibration improved organizational performance by 0.734 at a p-value of 0.000.

4.6 Summary

From the responses provided, there was regular talent calibration and integration of training and development opportunities based on the talent identified. The existence of poor succession planning among the participants was the major challenge identified. According to inferential statistics, talent calibration had the strongest and most significant effect on organizational performance ($R^2 = 0.520$), explaining 52% of the variance at $F = 109.42$, $p < 0.05$.

5. Conclusion

The study concluded that talent calibration played a significant role in the performance of organizations within the Murang'a County Government. According to the findings of the study, there existed a significant effect between talent assessments, talent reviews, competency evaluations, and provision of learning and training that met employees' needs on one hand, and increased productivity, accountability, and improved service delivery among employees on the other hand.

6. Recommendations

The human resource department needs to put in place an official succession planning mechanism, which will ensure continuity and that organizational knowledge is not lost. It is critical to identify high-potential staff members early and put in place mechanisms to develop their careers through mentoring and leadership training programs.

Furthermore, standardization of talent reviews by the service board in Murang'a County Government across all departments would help remove inconsistencies in talent calibration. Competency assessments should also be conducted continuously by departmental administrators to ensure that the training programs are addressing skill gaps.

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