

## Management of Career Growth and Employees' Turnover in Selected Cities in Eastern Uganda. A Study of Mbale and Jinja City Councils

Willies Wataka<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Odetha Katuramu<sup>2</sup>, Assoc. Prof. Wilfred Tarabinah<sup>3</sup>  
*PhD Candidate at Kampala International University<sup>1</sup>, Senior Lecturer-Kampala International University<sup>2</sup>,  
Senior Lecturer-Kampala International University<sup>3</sup>.*

**ABSTRACT:-** The research was able to survey the influence of career growth management on turnover of employees in Mbale and Jinja City Councils. The researchers used a cross-sectional research design, and data were collected using surveys and interviews to obtain quantitative as well as qualitative data. A total sample of 310 respondents was intended, but 297 questionnaires were used, as they were returned with complete information from the participants, resulting in a high rate of response. The data gathered was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS version 22. Findings from the study demonstrated a significant negative effects of career growth management on employees' turnover in the two city councils, thus suggesting that increased career growth opportunities were linked to reduced staff turnover. Based on the findings, the study recommends that Jinja and Mbale City councils should establish transparent paths for career advancement and further should also provide continuous education and training. Such methods will enrich employee satisfaction and diminished the intention to leave. Such an approach is crucial to nurture a motivated and loyal workforce amongst the councils

**Keywords:** Management of career growth, Employees' turnover, City Councils

### I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, career development of employees has been acknowledged as one of the key considerations for attracting and maintaining talent within organizations (Li et al., 2021). Studies from the 1930s and 40s found that lack of growth opportunity led to high levels of turnover (Marcotte, 2015). As a result, many governments and companies implemented official policies and programs that addressed training, mentorship, performance reviews and promotion opportunities to assist employees to improve their skills, and progress their careers (Kucharska & Nofer, 2021). Career development makes is less likely for employees to leave their jobs which may translate in improved productivity (Ghosh & Gurunathan, 2015). When a workplace provides support such as guidance, chances for promotion opportunities, and training to improve skills, employees feel appreciated and more confident in their future with the organization.

In Africa, after the colonial period, many government institutions struggled to grow and provide quality services because employees were leaving their jobs too often (Adeyemi & Akpotu, 2021). By the 1980s, research from countries like South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria found that many public sector workers were switching jobs regularly due to the absence of clear career advancement opportunities (Ojong, 2020). During the 1990s, as many African countries worked to improve their civil service systems, they introduced strategies such as planning for future leadership, offering training programs, and setting clear career paths to reduce staff turnover in public offices (Mabika, 2020). Reviews over the years have shown that these efforts have played a key role in creating more stable work environments and improving the efficiency of government institutions across the continent (Wamae, 2018).

In East Africa, studies pointed out that managing careers well was key for local governments trying to keep their staff from leaving (Munene, 2021). Research focusing on municipalities in Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi found that when workers had few chances for promotion or career growth, many chose to leave their jobs. In some councils, this led to annual staff turnover rates climbing above 30% (Carette et al.,

2020). Since then, leading cities in East Africa—such as Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Kampala, and Kigali—have introduced well-defined career systems that outline how employees can grow in their roles. These changes were aimed at keeping staff motivated and cutting down on unnecessary resignations (Tessema & Soeters, 2006).

In Uganda, career growth became an important concern after the government introduced decentralization reforms in the late 1990s (Aheisibwe et al., 2021). According to a study by the Uganda Local Government Association, many employees in various district and city administrations have left their jobs because of limited opportunities for career advancement, which has negatively affected service delivery (Kaddu, 2016). To address the problem, cities like Kampala Capital City Authority, Jinja and Mbale developed career paths based on specific skills and job requirements and introduced training programmes to support staff development (Nangoli et al., 2013). A report by the Ministry of Public Service later revealed that these efforts helped to reduce employee resignation rates in local government to under 15% per year (Semakula, 2019).

In Mbale and Jinja City Councils, there were challenges in retaining staff due to absence of clear career development plans (Atekyereza et al., 2011). In response, both councils began creating structured career paths that included defined entry levels, job roles and promotion based guidelines based on performance (Kiwanuka, 2012). Such measures reduced annual employees' turnover to less than 10% by 2013 which increased stability in service delivery in local governments (Ntege & Nannyonjo, 2017). Nevertheless, inadequate funding have continued to be an obstacle for execution of all the intended career development programs (Tumutegyeize et al., 2021).

Opolot & Ssemugabi (2019) examined how career growth management affected employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils and the findings revealed that many employees were leaving because they had no clear opportunities to advance their careers or improve the skills. The findings also showed that the employees who had left in the past year did so mainly because there were no career growth prospects. On the other hand, the 17% of staff who had received training and been promoted within the last two years felt more satisfied with their jobs and were less likely to leave.

Additionally, Mwesigwa and Mutumba (2024) interviewed human resource managers from both Mbale and Jinja City Councils and found that limited funding was a major obstacle to proper career planning. The councils didn't have well-organized programs for developing staff skills, mentoring, or planning for future leadership. Because of this, many skilled employees chose to leave for better job opportunities. In response, one of the city councils started offering career development support to help keep their staff. This study was therefore carried out to understand how managing career growth affects employee turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In an ideal setting, public sector organisations in Uganda are expected to support the growth, satisfaction and long-term retention of their employees through better and well planned career development strategies. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in Mbale and Jinja City Councils in Uganda. Recent findings by Opolot et al., 2023; Mwesigwa & Mutumba (2024) found that a lack of meaningful opportunities for career advancement has contributed to high staff turnover in both councils. While it is widely recognized that training and promoting capable employees is essential for consistent and effective service delivery, the reality in these councils has been quite different. Due to financial challenges, both councils have struggled to establish clear and structured career development systems. Many employees have remained in the same position for years without access to training or opportunities for promotion. This lack of progress has not only lowered morale but also pushed skilled staff to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Several key factors have contributed to the problem: limited funding for career development, the absence of clear policies guiding career progression, and the lack of regular training programs. These shortcomings have undermined efforts to retain competent employees and ensure smooth service delivery. Given this situation, there is a clear need for both Mbale and Jinja City Councils to adopt long-term career development frameworks and increase funding for human resource growth. Doing so would help retain experienced staff and improve overall performance. The present study was carried out to examine how managing career growth affects employees' turnover in the two City Councils.

### **Objective of the Study**

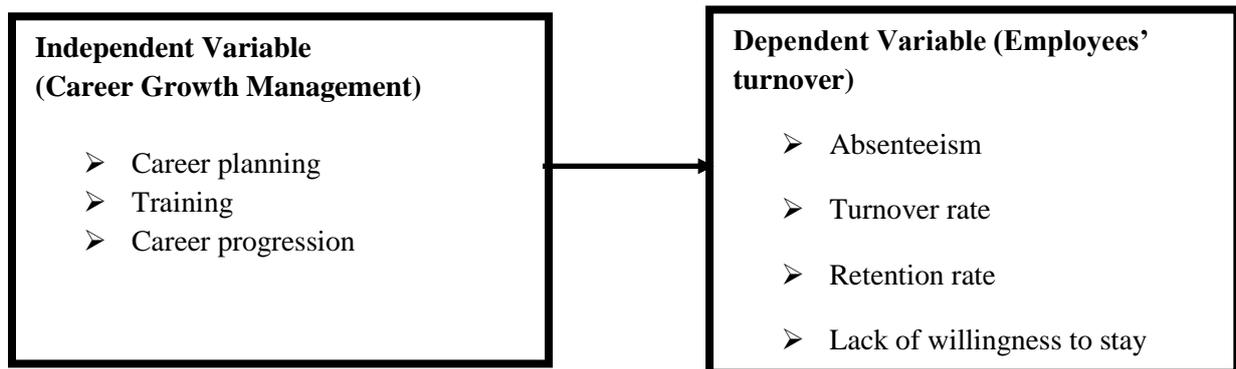
To examine the effects of employee career growth management on employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils.

### **Research Hypotheses**

H<sub>0</sub>: Employee career growth has no significant positive effect on employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils.

### Conceptual Framework

The figure below indicated how career growth management as independent variable relates to employees' turnover as a predicted/dependent variable.



Source: Glickman (1990), modified by the researcher (2023)

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ochen and Aceng (2020) conducted a study to understand what affects the career progression of employees in five regional referral hospitals in Uganda—Mulago, Fort Portal, Mbarara, Gulu, and Soroti. Their findings emphasized how important employees' own sense of competence is when it comes to getting promoted. The researchers surveyed 400 health workers and found a strong connection between how skilled staff believed they were and their chances of moving up in their careers. Staff who felt that their skills matched the requirements of available positions were more confident about their future career opportunities. The study showed that when promotions are based on clearly defined skills and qualifications, employees view the process as fair and transparent. This not only encourages a system where advancement is earned through merit but also boosts morale and trust in the organization. In essence, the research supported the idea that promotions should be grounded in actual performance and abilities, not favoritism or unclear criteria. This kind of approach ensures that the most capable people move up, creating a workplace culture where effort and competence are genuinely rewarded.

Kairu and Walingo (2020) studied how training and development influenced the career growth of employees at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. They surveyed 300 staff members and found that those who had taken part in more training programs—both within and outside the university over the past five years saw more progress in their careers and felt more satisfied with their jobs. The study showed a strong connection between the amount of training employees received and how supported they felt by the university in terms of career development. Interviews with staff revealed that these training opportunities not only improved their technical abilities but also boosted their confidence to apply for higher positions. Overall, employees appreciated the effort the university made to help them grow and move forward in their careers.

Owino and Were (2020) looked into why many public university staff in Kenya struggle with unclear career paths. They surveyed 350 non-teaching employees and found that only 15% believed their institutions had clear and fair systems for career growth. Many staff members said they didn't understand what was required to get promoted and felt the promotion process lacked transparency. Interviews revealed that employees were frustrated by what they saw as inconsistent rules and decisions that seemed random across different departments. The study also found that people's views on fairness and whether promotions were truly based on performance varied depending on their background. Specifically, younger staff, women, and those with less experience were more likely to feel unsure about what was expected for career advancement.

Akullu and Akullu (2020) conducted a study focused on how employees in Ugandan manufacturing firms perceive career mobility policies. The research highlighted major concerns among staff particularly lower-level employees about the fairness and transparency of promotion practices. Only 30% of these employees felt that the guidelines for promotion were clear or achievable. Qualitative findings revealed widespread confusion and skepticism. Many workers reported that the stated requirements for advancement often didn't match how promotions were actually handled, creating a sense of mistrust in the system. The study's quantitative analysis further showed that employee opinions on the fairness and clarity of the promotion criteria varied depending on how long they had worked at the company. Those with over five years of experience were more likely to view the promotion process as unfair or inconsistent compared to newer employees. The researchers concluded that, despite having written policies, promotions were often based on unclear standards and appeared influenced by

favoritism or bias rather than merit. This finding aligns with similar studies across public and private institutions, which have also pointed to the need for transparent, performance-based career development systems.

However, the study by Owino and Were (2020) was done in manufacturing firms not in the context of local governments/city councils which limited its understanding. As a result, the findings may not accurately reflect the unique challenges, bureaucracies, and service-oriented nature of public sector institutions. Local governments face different training needs, budget constraints, and employee expectations. Therefore, applying conclusions from the manufacturing sector to public administration may lead to misinformed strategies. This creates a gap in understanding employee training satisfaction within the specific context of Mbale and Jinja city councils.

Okitoi and Lagat (2018) explored how satisfied employees were with training and skills development in two major agencies in Kenya. Out of 400 surveyed employees, only about a third believed their organizations provided enough internal and external learning opportunities to help them grow in their careers. On average, satisfaction levels were low, and the responses varied widely, suggesting many workers were unhappy with the training offered. Interviews showed that training sessions were rare and often did not match employees' personal career goals. Those in tech and top management were especially dissatisfied with development opportunities. The study concluded that having clear systems for promotion and rewards is essential to improve productivity and reduce staff turnover.

In his study on career development program and employee performance in town councils in Kanungu District, focusing on staff training, career advancement opportunities and career planning, Ainebyoona (2021) found that when employees are given proper training, chances to grow in their careers, and support in planning their future at work, they tend to perform better. Things like setting personal goals, getting career advice, joining development programs, doing self-evaluations, and having access to training were all linked to improved job performance. However, the study didn't look into why employees leave their jobs, which is the main concern of the current research. Providing training and growth opportunities can help reduce the number of employees who quit.

### III. METHODS

The research adopted a cross-sectional design to gather data from a wide range of participants at a single point in time, allowing for the effective analysis of particular traits, behaviors, or conditions within the target population (Levin, 2017). This design was suitable for understanding the current status of variables without manipulating the study environment. The study was grounded in both ontological and epistemological perspectives, ensuring a strong philosophical foundation. From a total population of 1,384 individuals, a representative sample of 310 was calculated using Slovin's formula:  $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$ . Participant selection combined simple random sampling to ensure fairness and purposive sampling to target key informants. These methods enhanced the reliability and relevance of the data collected. Upon distributing the questionnaires, only 297 participants responded with usable quantitative data, slightly reducing the final response rate. Despite this, the study retained sufficient data for meaningful analysis and interpretation.

### IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this study, the researcher established the effect of employee career growth management on employees' turnover in Jinja and Mbale City Councils. Descriptive statistics were first used to analyse and summarise the findings as shown below;

The study collected data on five point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Not sure (NS), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) analysed using descriptive statistics and findings were presented in Table 4.1 below;

**Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics for Employee Career Growth Management in Jinja and Mbale City Councils**

Statements	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	Std.
Career advancement in the city council is based on competencies of staff	35(11.8%)	26(8.8%)	19(6.4%)	96(32.3%)	121(40.7%)	3.86	1.349
Our city council support career development through training of its staff	23(7.7%)	37(12.5%)	13(4.4%)	110(37.0%)	114(38.4%)	3.86	1.267
Our city council has a well-structured career progression plan guided on equity and merit	19(6.5%)	34(11.4%)	15(5.1%)	102(34.3%)	127(42.7%)	3.95	1.234
Our city council has a career progression guideline which stipulates conditions for promotion	12(4.2%)	33(11.1%)	16(5.2%)	116(39.2%)	120(40.3%)	4.03	1.111
My council has both internal and external programs that develop its staff for future positions	19(6.5%)	45(15.2%)	16(5.3%)	119(39.9%)	98(33.1%)	3.79	1.240

**Source: Primary Data (2024)**

The findings in Table 4.1 revealed that 121 respondents (40.7%) strongly agreed, and 96 (32.3%) agreed that career advancement in the city council is based on staff competencies. Meanwhile, 19 (6.4%) were undecided, 35 (11.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed (9 and 26 respectively). The responses yielded a high mean score of 3.86 with a standard deviation of 1.349, indicating that many employees perceive promotions as merit-based, though the relatively high standard deviation reflects a degree of variation in opinions. The findings support the continuation or strengthening of competency-based human resource practices within the city council. Policy-makers may use this evidence to justify ongoing training programs, performance appraisals, and transparent promotion criteria.

The results from Table 4.1 show that a large majority of respondents (75.4%) either strongly agreed or agreed that their city council supports career development through staff training. Only a small number were unsure (4.4%), while about 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The high mean score of 3.86 suggests that most employees believe the council invests in training and development, which is a positive sign for workforce growth and capacity building. However, the standard deviation of 1.267 indicates some variation in opinions, meaning not everyone shares this view. This could imply that while training opportunities exist, access or communication about them might not be consistent across the board. For management, this highlights the need to ensure equal and transparent access to training programs to enhance employee satisfaction, boost performance, and foster a stronger sense of professional development throughout the organization.

The findings in Table 4.1 indicate that a strong majority of respondents (77%) either strongly agreed or agreed that their city councils have a well-structured career progression plan based on equity and merit. Only a small fraction (5.1%) were uncertain, while a minority (17.9%) expressed disagreement. The high mean score of 3.95 suggests that most employees view the career progression system as fair and transparent, which is encouraging for morale, motivation, and retention. However, the standard deviation of 1.234 points to some variability in responses, implying that not all staff may experience or perceive the system equally. This suggests that while the career advancement framework is generally effective, city councils should ensure consistent implementation across departments and improve communication to address any gaps in understanding or access to progression opportunities.

The results from Table 4.1 show that a significant majority of respondents (79.5%) either strongly agreed or agreed that their city councils have clear career progression guidelines outlining conditions for promotion. Only a small portion were unsure (5.2%), while a combined 15.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The high mean score of 4.03 reflects strong overall agreement and confidence in the existence of structured promotion criteria. However, the standard deviation of 1.111 suggests there is still some variation in how employees perceive or experience these guidelines. This implies that while the promotion framework is generally recognized and appreciated, city councils may need to improve awareness, accessibility, or consistent

application of these guidelines to ensure all staff feel equally informed and treated fairly in career advancement processes.

The results from Table 4.1 show that a large portion of employees 73% either strongly agreed or agreed that their city council provides both internal and external programs to prepare staff for future roles. A small number (5.3%) were uncertain, while a notable minority (21.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.79 indicates a generally positive perception of staff development opportunities, suggesting that many employees feel supported in their career growth. However, the standard deviation of 1.240 points to some differences in how these opportunities are perceived or accessed. This implies that while development programs are in place, their reach or visibility may vary across departments. Therefore, city councils should consider evaluating the consistency and communication of these programs to ensure all staff have equal access and awareness, ultimately strengthening talent development and succession planning.

### Employees Turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils

The researcher performed descriptive analysis of the employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils using frequencies, percentages, mean, standard deviation on a five point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Not sure (NS), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) and the following were the findings;

**Table 4.2: Employees Turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils**

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std.
I feel like leaving my work because am dissatisfied with it	111(37.4%)	75(25.2%)	0(0.0%)	44(14.8%)	67(22.6%)	2.60	1.62
There is increased absenteeism and employee's decision to leave	98(33.0%)	130(43.8%)	0(0.0%)	46(15.4%)	23(7.7%)	2.21	1.27
My desire to work for a long time is not fueled by the relevant authorities	87(29.3%)	137(46.1%)	17(5.7%)	40(13.5%)	16(5.4%)	2.20	1.16
Poor reviews are a red flag for potential turnover	40(13.5%)	71(23.9%)	0(0.0%)	116(39.0%)	70(23.6%)	3.36	1.41
As the workplace environment is favorable, I have a strong attachment to the district.	37(12.5%)	83(27.9%)	38(12.8%)	93(31.3%)	46(15.5%)	3.09	1.30
I do not often extend my workday to complete my tasks	16(5.4%)	40(13.5%)	17(5.7%)	137(46.1%)	87(29.3%)	3.81	1.14

**Source: Primary Data (2024)**

In Table 4.2, the findings on the statement "I feel like leaving my work because I am dissatisfied with it" has a mean score of 2.60 and a standard deviation of 1.62. The high percentage of responses indicating strong disagreement (37.4%) and disagreement (25.2%) shows that a significant portion of respondents do not feel dissatisfied enough to consider leaving their jobs. However, there is still a notable minority who either agree (14.8%) or strongly agree (22.6%) with the statement. The large standard deviation reflects considerable variability in responses, suggesting that while many are content, there is a diverse range of opinions regarding job satisfaction. This variability indicates that job dissatisfaction and its potential impact on turnover might not be uniformly experienced across the workforce.

Regarding the statement "There is increased absenteeism and employees' decision to leave," the mean score is 2.21 with a standard deviation of 1.27. The results show that the majority of respondents disagree (33.0%) or strongly disagree (43.8%) with the idea that absenteeism is rising and contributing to employees' decision to leave. The low mean score suggests a general perception that absenteeism is not a significant issue related to turnover. The relatively low standard deviation indicates a more consistent response pattern among respondents, reflecting a consensus that absenteeism is not currently a major factor in employee turnover.

The study findings on the statement "My desire to work for a long time is not fueled by the relevant authorities" has a mean score of 2.20 and a standard deviation of 1.16. This result suggests that a majority of respondents disagree (29.3%) or strongly disagree (46.1%) with the statement, implying that many feel

supported or motivated by relevant authorities. The low mean score reflects a general lack of belief that authorities are failing to motivate long-term employment. The relatively low standard deviation indicates that respondents have a fairly uniform view on the support from authorities, suggesting a general satisfaction with the motivation and support provided by relevant figures.

Regarding the statement "Poor reviews are a red flag for potential turnover," the mean score is 3.36 with a standard deviation of 1.41. This result shows a more moderate view, with a significant portion of respondents agreeing (39.0%) or strongly agreeing (23.6%) that poor reviews can signal potential turnover. This suggests that while not everyone sees poor reviews as a strong indicator of turnover, there is a notable belief among respondents that they could be indicative of future employee departures. The higher mean and standard deviation indicate more variability in responses, reflecting diverse opinions on the impact of reviews on turnover.

The statement "As the workplace environment is favorable, I have a strong attachment to the district" had a mean score of 3.09 and a standard deviation of 1.30. The mean indicated a moderate level of agreement with the statement, suggesting that many respondents feel a positive workplace environment contributes to their attachment to the district. The relatively high percentage of respondents agreeing (31.3%) and strongly agreeing (15.5%) supports this view. The standard deviation shows a moderate level of variability in responses, indicating that while many see a favorable workplace as a factor in their attachment, opinions on the strength of this relationship vary.

For the statement "I do not often extend my workday to complete my tasks," the mean score was 3.81 with a standard deviation of 1.14. This high mean score indicated that a significant number of respondents agree (46.1%) or strongly agree (29.3%) that they do not frequently extend their workday. This suggests that many employees manage to complete their tasks within regular working hours, which could imply effective time management or a manageable workload. The low standard deviation reflects a relatively consistent view among respondents, showing general agreement on the typical workday structure.

Table 4.3 shows correlational results that depict the relationship between employee career growth management and employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils.

**Table 4.3: Correlation between Employee Career Growth Management and Employees' Turnover**

		Employee career growth management	Employees' Turnover
Employee career growth management	Pearson Correlation	1	-.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.009
	N	297	297
Employee turnover	Pearson Correlation	-.053	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	
	N	297	297

Source: Primary Data (2024)

From table 4.3, correlation analysis examined the relationship between employee career growth management and employee turnover rates in Jinja and Mbale city councils. The findings found a negative correlation of -0.053 between employee career growth management and employee turnover, indicating that higher levels of career growth management are weakly associated with lower turnover. However, the correlation is very weak at 0.053 and the relationship was statistically significant  $p > 0.00$ . Therefore, while career growth management may potentially help reduce employee turnover, there is no strong relationship between the two variables.

The weak strength of the relationship suggests that career growth management alone is not sufficient to significantly reduce employee turnover. This could imply that while initiatives to support career development may contribute to retention, they may need to be coupled with other strategies, such as improving work conditions, increasing employee engagement, or enhancing compensation packages, to have a more substantial effect on turnover. Organizations should consider a holistic approach to employee retention, integrating career development with other critical factors that influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

And since there is at least some relationship, the two variables are fit for a regression analysis, which revealed the effect of Employee career growth management on employees' turnover. Therefore, a regression analysis was performed to confirm the effect of Employee career growth management on employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils.

The study used simple regression analysis to examine the effect of employee career growth management on employees' turnover and this was done to see if there was any significance between employee career growth management on employees' turnover as below;

**Table 4.4: Model summary for Employee Career Growth Management and Employees' Turnover**

Model summary						
Model	R	R. Square	Adjusted R Square		Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	-.053 <sup>a</sup>	.280	.278		.594	
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	3.959	.170		23.264	.000
	Employee career growth management	-.036	.042	-.053	.863	.009

a. Dependent Variable: Employees' Turnover

The model summary in Table 4.4 shows an R-squared value of 0.280, which is relatively low. This means that only 28% of the changes in employee turnover can be explained by the effect of career growth management, while the remaining 72% is influenced by other factors. The regression analysis in Table 4.4 reveals that career growth management has a significant impact on employee turnover. The statistical results, with  $\beta = -0.036$ ,  $t = 0.863$ , and  $p < 0.009$ , indicate that a one-unit increase in career growth management is associated with a decrease in employee turnover by 0.036 units.

These findings suggest that employees are more likely to stay with the organization when there are clear opportunities for career advancement. Essentially, improving career growth management programs and perceptions by just one unit could lead to a 0.036 unit reduction in turnover rates. This study highlights the important role that career progression opportunities play in reducing staff turnover in city councils.

Does employee career growth influence employee turnover?

A key informant said *"It absolutely does though it is sometimes relative because the local government structure are limited and the employees will feel that there is no space for growth thereby leading employees to look for better options that allow growth. For example if people acquire more skills than in the Job they have been placed, they will definitely look for somewhere to apply these skills that staying in one place where they cannot practice them"* (Participant JCC).

## V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study suggest that a majority of respondents (with a mean of 3.86) believed that career advancement in their organizations is based on employee competencies, which implies a general agreement with merit-based progression. The relatively high mean indicates a consensus that employees' competencies should drive career growth, reflecting a positive attitude towards meritocratic practices in the City Councils of Jinja and Mbale. However, the standard deviation of 1.349 reveals some variability in individual perceptions and experiences regarding the fairness and implementation of merit-based promotions. This suggests that while many employees support the idea of merit-based progression, there may be differences in how fairly these practices are perceived across the workforce. The findings align with Ochen and Aceng (2020), who also found that employees trust merit-based systems that reward qualifications and performance.

Regarding career development through training, the mean score of 3.86 indicates that most employees believe their organizations provide adequate training opportunities to support career growth. This perception is positive, but the standard deviation of 1.267 shows that individual experiences of training support vary. Kairu and Walingo (2020) also found that training programs helped employees develop technical skills and feel more prepared for career advancement, which aligns with the positive views expressed in this study. Thus, providing ongoing training and development opportunities is likely to foster positive perceptions of career progression. On the structured career progression plan based on equity and merit, the mean score of 3.95 reflects a general agreement that these plans are clear and fair, though the standard deviation of 1.234 indicates some differing

opinions among employees. This suggests that while there is broad support for the equity and merit-based progression plans, some employees may perceive them as less transparent or fair. This is in contrast to Owino and Were (2020), who found ambiguities in career advancement processes in public universities in Kenya. For career progression guidelines that stipulate promotion conditions, the mean score of 4.03 shows that most respondents agreed that the criteria for promotion are reasonable, though the standard deviation of 1.111 reveals some differing views. This is consistent with the study findings, which show a general consensus on the fairness of career progression guidelines, although demographic or employment factors may influence individual perceptions. However, Akullu and Akullu (2020) found more significant disagreement with career progression benchmarks in other organizations, highlighting some inconsistencies in how employees view promotion criteria.

The results for internal and external development programs showed a mean of 3.79, indicating a generally positive view of these opportunities, although the standard deviation of 1.240 reveals some variability in employees' experiences with these programs. This suggests that while many employees appreciate the development programs offered, their experiences may differ. In contrast, Okitoi and Lagat (2018) found that only 35% of employees felt their organizations offered sufficient internal and external learning programs. This difference challenges the general perception of widespread satisfaction with career development opportunities. Finally, the regression analysis showed that career growth management significantly affects employee turnover, with a  $\beta$  of -0.036,  $t = 0.863$ , and  $p < 0.009$ . This indicates that an increase in career growth management practices is associated with a decrease in employee turnover. This finding is consistent with Ainebyoona (2021), who found that career development programs in local governments helped reduce employee turnover by promoting training, career planning, and advancement opportunities. This reinforces the idea that career growth management can play a key role in improving retention within city councils.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study hypothesized that employee career growth management has no significant positive effects on employees' turnover in City Councils of Mbale and Jinja. However, the findings of the study revealed a significant negative effect of employee career growth on employees' turnover. Based on the findings, the study concluded that employee career growth management has a significant negative impact on employee turnover within the City Councils of Mbale and Jinja. This means that effective career growth management practices are linked to a decrease in the likelihood of employees leaving their positions. The results directly challenge the null hypothesis, which proposed that career growth management would not affect turnover. Instead, the data supports the alternative hypothesis, which suggests that there is a strong negative relationship between career growth opportunities and employee turnover, indicating that enhancing career development programs can lead to lower turnover rates among staff.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's results highlight the significant effects of employee career growth in reducing turnover, underscoring the value of career development programs. Therefore, the study recommended that City Councils should implement well-defined career progression plans and offer continuous training and development opportunities. Mentorship programs can provide employees with guidance and insights from seasoned colleagues, promoting a culture of growth and learning. Furthermore, offering financial support for further education, such as tuition reimbursement or sponsorships, can motivate employees to improve their skills and progress within the organization. Regular career development conversations between employees and managers are also essential to align individual career aspirations with the council's objectives, ultimately contributing to reduced turnover.

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