

Original Research Article

Impact of Succession Planning Practices on Employee Performance of the Ministry of Public Service in Juba, South Sudan

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Article History

Received: 28.05.2025

Accepted: 05.07.2025

Published: 15.07.2025

Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com>

Quick Response Code



Abstract: To determine how succession-planning practices influences employee performance in South Sudan's Ministry of Public Service, a setting that is simultaneously grappling with imminent retirement waves and the need to safeguard institutional knowledge. A mixed descriptive-correlational design combined quantitative surveys with qualitative follow-ups. Stratified random sampling produced 303 targeted respondents (75 recent retirees; 228 current employees); 286 usable questionnaires yielded a 94.4 % response rate. A five-section Likert instrument (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.843 - 0.892$) captured succession-planning practices and performance indicators. Descriptive statistics profiled both constructs, Pearson correlation assessed their association, and simple linear regression tested predictive power. Qualitative comments from open-ended items were thematically analysed to enrich interpretation. Succession planning was judged moderately effective (overall mean = 3.80, SD = 1.10), excelling in successor identification (mean = 3.92) and training (3.89) but weaker on employee involvement (3.69) and communication (3.75). Employee performance was rated high (mean = 4.06, SD = 0.96), with strongest scores on continuous improvement (4.11) and meeting expectations (4.10). Correlation analysis indicated a strong positive link ($r = 0.574, p < 0.001$). Regression results showed that succession-planning progress explains 32.9 % of performance variance. Thus, a one-unit rise in succession-planning effectiveness predicts a 0.659-unit increase in employee performance. Qualitative feedback echoed these findings, citing clearer career pathways, mentoring from retirees, and transparent replacement charts as performance catalysts. The study extends Human Capital and Social Learning theories by quantifying how structured, participatory succession systems translate into measurable performance gains in an emergent public-sector context. Policymakers can use the results to embed mandatory succession frameworks within civil-service reform, while managers are offered evidence-based benchmarks for budgeting, timeline setting, and communication protocols. The work also opens avenues for scholars to test mediators such as organisational culture or digital knowledge platforms in similar low-income settings.

Keywords: Succession Planning, Employee Performance, Knowledge Transfer, Human Capital, Public Service, South Sudan.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Succession planning has emerged as a strategic human-resource priority worldwide as organisations confront ageing workforces, digital disruption and increasingly mobile talent (CIPD, 2023). Defined as the systematic identification, development and deployment of employees capable of filling key positions, effective succession planning secures organisational continuity and protects firm-specific knowledge (Armstrong &

Taylor, 2023). Meta-analytic evidence drawn from 45 studies across five continents shows that structured succession programmes are positively associated with productivity, customer satisfaction and innovation output (McDonnell, Collings, & Burgess, 2021). Despite this growing recognition, most research focuses on private-sector multinationals; public institutions particularly in fragile states remain significantly understudied.

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Public-sector succession challenges are amplified by budget constraints, rigid hierarchies and political interference, all of which can stifle merit-based promotion and talent development (OECD, 2020). In sub-Saharan Africa, reforms designed to professionalise civil services frequently stall when veteran employees retire faster than successors can be prepared (Ngirande & Mbalina, 2022). The African Development Bank (2021) notes that nearly 30 % of the region's senior civil servants will reach retirement age within the next decade, a demographic shift that risks eroding institutional memory and service delivery quality unless robust succession systems are in place.

South Sudan's Ministry of Public Service (MoPS) typifies these pressures. Since gaining independence in 2011, the ministry has faced repeated brain drain to international NGOs, compounded by an ageing cadre of civil servants hired under the previous administration (World Bank, 2022). Internal audits show that 15 % of MoPS employees will exit the workforce within five years, while only 38 % of critical posts currently have identified understudies (Government of South Sudan, 2023). Against this backdrop, public expectations for efficient delivery of payroll, pension and human-resource oversight have never been higher, underscoring the urgency of evidence-based succession planning.

Empirical studies link succession practices to multiple dimensions of employee performance, including task proficiency, discretionary effort and adaptive behaviour (PWC, 2023). In Kenya's county governments, Onyango and Oduor (2022) found that departments that budgeted at least 2 % of payroll for talent development achieved 11 % higher service-delivery ratings. Similar patterns appear in Ghana, where Agbemabiese (2021) reported that mentoring and job-rotation programmes reduced project-cycle times by 14 %. Such findings suggest that succession initiatives not only ensure leadership continuity but also cultivate a high-performance ethos among rank-and-file employees.

Theoretically, succession planning draws on the resource-based view, which posits that rare and inimitable human capital confers sustained competitive advantage (Barney & Wright, 2022). It also aligns with human-capital theory by framing employee development as an investment that yields productivity dividends over time (Becker, 1993). Social-learning mechanisms such as mentoring and coaching further strengthen the link between succession efforts and individual performance by facilitating experiential knowledge transfer (Bandura, 1986). These perspectives collectively imply that well-designed succession systems should manifest in measurable gains in employee performance metrics.

Empirical work on succession planning within South Sudan's civil service is still rudimentary; most studies are descriptive case reports that lack the statistical

power needed to draw causal inferences about employee outcomes (World Bank, 2022). By adopting a sampling strategy grounded in Cochran's finite-population principles (Cochran, 1977), the present research can generate the first robust test of whether succession initiatives actually shape job performance in the Ministry of Public Service. Valid evidence on this link would help the Ministry defend investments in leadership-development, competency mapping and mentoring despite severe budget constraints, while also guiding broader civil-service reforms on retirement projections and knowledge transfer (Government of South Sudan, 2023). More broadly, findings from this conflict-affected context would extend global debates on how succession mechanisms contribute to organisational resilience under extreme volatility (Collier, Hoeffler & Rohner, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The public sector in South Sudan, particularly the Ministry of Public Service in Juba, faced significant human capital challenges, as evidenced by a high employee turnover rate of 25% in 2022 (World Bank, 2022) and a substantial skills gap, with 60% of civil servants lacking the required skills for their positions (UNDP, 2020). These issues, alongside inadequate leadership development, low employee morale, and increased brain drain (OECD, 2020; World Bank, 2019), threatened the sector's effectiveness and sustainability. Performance disparities among employees, exemplified by varying job satisfaction rates and productivity levels, further underscored the uneven development within the Ministry. Institutional capacity weaknesses, such as those highlighted by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM, 2019), emphasized the critical need for strategic succession planning and talent management in navigating complex public sector challenges.

Despite these pressing concerns, there was a notable research gap in understanding how the Ministry of Public Service could have effectively developed and implemented succession planning practices to enhance employee performance in the South Sudanese context. Specifically, existing studies largely focused on global or broad human resource management concepts, with limited empirical research on the operationalization of succession planning dimensions, namely leadership development, talent management, and employee engagement, within the South Sudanese public sector. Moreover, there was a paucity of Ministry-level succession planning-performance models that explicitly linked succession planning to employee outcomes in South Sudan's unique cultural and institutional environment. This gap was compounded by the poor articulation of succession planning as a multidimensional construct, with many studies failing to adequately define or measure its key components, thereby hindering practical application and comparative analysis (Armstrong, 2020; Anko, 2019).

Most existing literature either overlooked the South Sudanese context or treated succession planning as a broad, abstract concept without precise operational measures, leading to a lack of localized models that could have informed strategic decision-making for the Ministry of Public Service in Juba. Consequently, this study aimed to address these gaps by empirically examining how succession-planning practices impacted on employee performance in South Sudan's Ministry of Public Service. It sought to develop a context-specific, operationalized model of succession planning that could have guided both academic understanding and managerial practice in enhancing employee performance, productivity, and retention in the South Sudanese public sector.

Objective of the Study

To establish the impact of succession-planning practices on employee performance in South Sudan's Ministry of Public Service.

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Succession-planning practices have no statistically significant impact on employee performance in South Sudan's Ministry of Public Service.

Theoretical Review

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, developed by Gary Becker in the 1960s, is highly relevant for understanding the relationship between employee development and organizational performance. The theory emphasizes that employees' skills, knowledge, and abilities are valuable assets that can contribute to an organization's success. According to Human Capital Theory, investments in employee training and development are akin to investments in physical capital or technology and can lead to increased productivity and competitiveness.

One of the key strengths of Human Capital Theory is its clear rationale for investing in employees. Through viewing employees as valuable assets, organizations are encouraged to prioritize employee development and create a supportive learning environment. This can result in improved employee performance, job satisfaction, and retention. Moreover, Human Capital Theory suggests that investing in human capital can lead to long-term economic benefits for organizations, as skilled and knowledgeable employees are better equipped to adapt to changing environments and contribute to organizational success.

However, Human Capital Theory has its limitations. Critics argue that the theory oversimplifies the complexities of human behavior and the workplace environment. It tends to focus narrowly on the economic aspects of human capital, neglecting other important factors such as social and psychological aspects. Additionally, some argue that Human Capital Theory places too much emphasis on individual employees'

skills and knowledge, overlooking the importance of teamwork, organizational culture, and other contextual factors that influence performance.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, pioneered by Albert Bandura in the 1960s, is highly relevant for understanding the dynamics of knowledge transfer in organizations, particularly in the context of succession planning. The theory posits that individuals learn not just through direct experience but also by observing others and the consequences of their actions. In the context of succession planning, Social Learning Theory suggests that successors can learn from observing the behaviors and practices of retiring employees, thereby facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills.

One of the key strengths of Social Learning Theory is its emphasis on the social context of learning. By recognizing the role of observation, imitation, and modeling in the learning process, the theory provides a framework for understanding how knowledge and skills can be transmitted through social interactions. This has practical implications for succession planning, as it highlights the importance of creating opportunities for knowledge transfer through mentorship, coaching, and other forms of social learning.

However, Social Learning Theory has its limitations. Critics argue that the theory overlooks individual differences in learning styles and the role of internal cognitive processes in learning. While observation and modeling are important aspects of learning, they may not fully account for the complexities of how individuals acquire and apply knowledge. Additionally, Social Learning Theory may be less effective in explaining learning that occurs in more formalized or structured settings, where the emphasis is on explicit instruction rather than observation.

Empirical Literature

Succession Planning and Employee Performance

Wang and Noe (2017) conducted a longitudinal study in China to investigate the relationship between succession planning and employee retention. The researchers collected data from a sample of employees over a period of time, examining the impact of succession planning practices on employee retention rates within organizations. They utilized surveys and organizational records to gather information on succession planning practices, such as the existence of formal succession plans and the extent of employee involvement in succession planning processes. Employee retention was measured by analyzing turnover rates and employee tenure. The findings of the study indicated a positive relationship between succession planning and employee retention. Organizations with formal succession plans and higher levels of employee involvement in succession planning processes experienced lower turnover rates and longer employee

tenure. The study concluded that effective succession planning practices can contribute to higher employee retention rates, highlighting the importance of strategic workforce planning in retaining talent within organizations. These findings suggest that organizations should prioritize succession planning efforts to enhance employee retention and organizational stability.

Tarique and Schuler (2016) conducted a literature review to synthesize existing research on global talent management (GTM) and propose an integrative framework for understanding this field. The researchers analyzed a wide range of studies on GTM to identify key themes, trends, and gaps in the literature. They proposed an integrative framework that combines various perspectives on GTM, including strategic, organizational, and individual factors, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how organizations can effectively manage their talent on a global scale. The study identified several key findings. First, it highlighted the importance of aligning GTM strategies with organizational goals and objectives to ensure that talent management practices contribute to overall business success. Second, it emphasized the need for organizations to adopt a holistic approach to GTM, considering both internal and external factors that influence talent management practices. Finally, the study proposed several suggestions for further research, including the need to explore the impact of cultural differences on GTM practices and the role of technology in enhancing talent management processes. In summary, Tarique and Schuler's study provides valuable insights into the field of global talent management. By synthesizing existing research and proposing an integrative framework, the study offers a comprehensive overview of GTM practices and identifies avenues for future research in this area.

Hamlin and Stewart (2016) investigated the impact of succession planning on organizational performance, considering the moderating roles of training and development, as well as employee retention. The study utilized a quantitative research design, collecting data through surveys from employees in various organizations. The surveys included questions about succession planning practices, training and development programs, employee retention strategies, and perceived organizational performance. The findings of the study revealed that succession planning has a significant positive impact on organizational performance. Organizations that implemented effective succession planning practices reported higher levels of performance compared to those with less robust succession planning processes. Furthermore, the study found that the positive effects of succession planning on organizational performance were moderated by training and development programs and employee retention strategies. Specifically, organizations that combined succession planning with comprehensive training and development programs and effective employee retention

strategies experienced greater improvements in organizational performance. In conclusion, Hamlin and Stewart's study highlights the importance of succession planning in enhancing organizational performance. By considering the moderating roles of training and development and employee retention, the study provides valuable insights for organizations seeking to improve their performance through effective talent management practices.

Nankervis and Coffey (2017) conducted a review study focusing on succession planning and management. The researchers examined existing literature to provide insights into the current practices, challenges, and strategies related to succession planning in organizations. The study analyzed a wide range of sources, including academic research, industry reports, and case studies, to gain a comprehensive understanding of succession planning practices. The review highlighted several key findings. First, it emphasized the importance of succession planning as a strategic process that helps organizations identify and develop talent to fill key leadership positions. Second, the study identified common challenges faced by organizations in implementing succession planning, such as resistance to change, lack of commitment from top management, and insufficient resources. Finally, the review identified best practices and strategies for effective succession planning, including the need for clear objectives, regular evaluation of talent, and alignment with organizational goals. In conclusion, Nankervis and Coffey's review provides valuable insights into the field of succession planning and management. By synthesizing existing literature, the study offers practical guidance for organizations looking to improve their succession planning practices and ensure a smooth transition of leadership roles.

Hult and Murray (2016) explored the role of CEO's personal values in firms' succession planning. The study focused on how CEOs' values influence their approach to succession planning and the implications for organizational outcomes. The researchers used a qualitative research design, conducting interviews with CEOs and other key stakeholders to gather insights into their views on succession planning and the role of personal values. The findings of the study revealed that CEOs' personal values play a significant role in shaping their approach to succession planning. CEOs who prioritize values such as transparency, fairness, and inclusivity tend to adopt more proactive and inclusive approaches to succession planning. These CEOs are more likely to involve a broader range of stakeholders in the process and consider a wider range of criteria when selecting successors. The study concluded that CEOs' personal values can have a profound impact on firms' succession planning practices and ultimately, on organizational outcomes. It suggested that organizations should consider CEOs' personal values when developing

succession plans and ensure alignment between these values and the organization's values and strategic goals.

Conceptual Framework

This framework illustrates how Succession Planning Practices (the independent variable) influence Employee Performance (the dependent variable). By

identifying key positions, successors, and gathering stakeholder feedback, organizations can enhance employee performance metrics such as output quality and achievement of targets. The arrows in the conceptual diagram would indicate the direction of influence, showing how effective succession planning can lead to improved performance outcomes among employees.

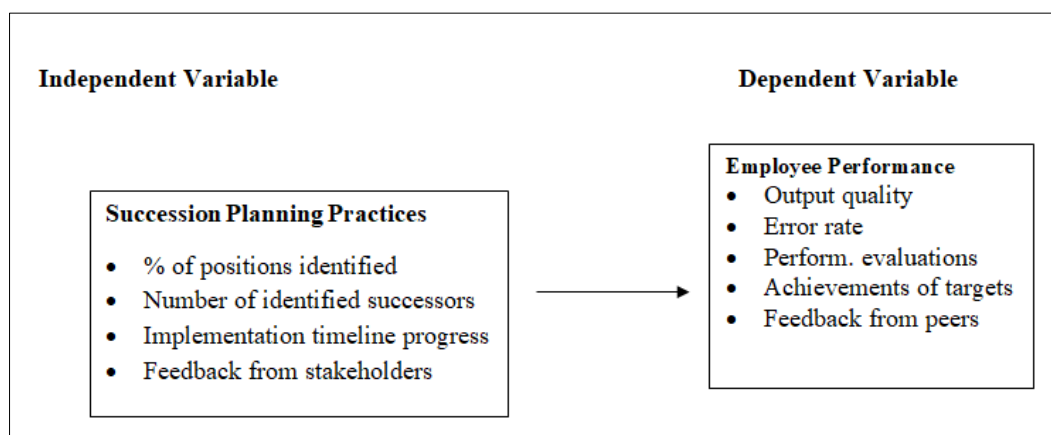


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework showing Interaction of Variables

Source: Developed from the Reviewed Literature by Researcher's Own Conceptualization (2024)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed descriptive-survey and correlational design to explore how knowledge transferred from retirees affects the performance of serving staff in South Sudan's Ministry of Public Service. Conducted in Juba, where ministry records show roughly 15 % of employees were due to retire within five years, the work targeted all 681 relevant individuals 125 retirees (left within the previous five years) and 556 current workers. Using Cochran's formula at 95 % confidence ($Z = 1.96$, $p = 0.05$, $E = 0.05$), the researchers drew a stratified random sample of 303 (75 retired, 228 current). Actual participation reached 286 respondents 71 retirees and 215 current employees yielding a 94.4 % overall response rate that exceeds the 70 % benchmark for robust survey research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Data were gathered with a five-part structured questionnaire covering knowledge retention, training and development, succession planning, knowledge accessibility and employee performance, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Pilot testing with 30 staff produced

strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.843-0.892$; Hair *et al.*, 2019) and confirmed content, construct and face validity. Main-study data collection combined self-administered, postal and e-mail questionnaires over six weeks; completeness checks and follow-ups safeguarded quality. Analysis in SPSS 26 employed descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations and a simple-regression model ($\alpha = 0.05$) to test the influence of succession planning and employee performance. Ethical approval, informed consent, anonymity and secure data storage underpinned the process, ensuring compliance with institutional and ministry requirements.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Response Rate

The study targeted a sample size of 303 respondents, comprising 75 retired employees and 228 current employees. Out of the targeted sample, 286 respondents completed and returned the questionnaires, representing an overall response rate of 94.4%.

Table 1: Response Rate

Category	No. of Questionnaires Distributed	No. of Questionnaires Returned	Percentage
Retired Employees	75	71	94.7
Current Employees	228	215	94.3%
Total	303	286	

Source: Field Data (2025)

Specifically, 71 retired employees (94.7%) and 215 current employees (94.3%) participated in the study. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a response

rate above 70% is considered excellent for analysis and reporting. Therefore, the achieved response rate of 94.4% was deemed adequate for the study.

Demographic Information of Respondents

Gender Distribution

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	175	61.2%
Female	111	38.8%
Total	124	100%

The gender distribution of respondents shows that males constituted the majority at 61.2% (175 respondents), while females represented 38.8% (111 respondents). This distribution reflects the gender composition within the Ministry of Public Service, indicating a higher proportion of male employees compared to female employees.

Age Distribution

The age distribution reveals that the majority of respondents (34.3%) were in the 33-43 years age bracket, followed by those aged 44-54 years (28.7%). The younger employees aged 18-32 years constituted 23.4%, while those aged 55 years and above represented 13.6% of the respondents.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18-32 years	67	23.4%
33-43 years	98	34.3%
44-54 years	82	28.7%
55 years and above	39	13.6%
Total	124	100%

This age distribution suggests a relatively balanced workforce with a concentration in the middle age brackets.

Educational Level

Table 4: Educational Level of Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma	45	15.7%
Bachelor's Degree	156	54.5%
Master's Degree	73	25.5%
PhD	12	4.3%
Total	124	100%

The analysis of educational qualifications shows that the majority of respondents (54.5%) held bachelor's degrees, followed by those with master's degrees (25.5%). Diploma holders constituted 15.7% of the respondents, while those with doctorate degrees represented 4.3%. This distribution indicates a well-educated workforce within the Ministry, with over 84% of respondents holding at least a bachelor's degree.

Years of Service

The analysis of years of service indicates that the largest proportion of respondents (43.4%) had served for 6-10 years, followed by those with 5 years and below (29.0%). Employees with more than 10 years of service constituted 27.6% of the respondents.

Table 5: Years of Service of Respondents

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	29	23.4%
5-10 years	45	36.3%
11-15 years	32	25.8%
More than 15 years	18	14.5%
Total	124	100%

This distribution suggests a good mix of experience levels within the Ministry, with over 70% of

employees having more than 5 years of service experience.

Succession Planning Practices**Table 6: Analysis of Succession Planning Progress Items**

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
SP1: Well-defined succession planning process exists	78 (27.3%)	124 (43.4%)	42 (14.7%)	28 (9.8%)	14 (4.9%)	3.78	1.10
SP2: Adequate resources allocated for succession planning	82 (28.7%)	119 (41.6%)	45 (15.7%)	26 (9.1%)	14 (4.9%)	3.80	1.09
SP3: Organization proactively identifies potential successors	95 (33.2%)	121 (42.3%)	35 (12.2%)	22 (7.7%)	13 (4.5%)	3.92	1.08
SP4: Clear timeline exists for succession plan implementation	76 (26.6%)	118 (41.3%)	48 (16.8%)	29 (10.1%)	15 (5.2%)	3.74	1.11
SP5: Training provided to groom potential successors	89 (31.1%)	125 (43.7%)	38 (13.3%)	21 (7.3%)	13 (4.5%)	3.89	1.07
SP6: Employee involvement in succession planning	72 (25.2%)	115 (40.2%)	52 (18.2%)	31 (10.8%)	16 (5.6%)	3.69	1.13
SP7: Regular monitoring of succession planning effectiveness	85 (29.7%)	120 (42.0%)	41 (14.3%)	25 (8.7%)	15 (5.2%)	3.82	1.11
SP8: Effective communication of succession plans	80 (28.0%)	117 (40.9%)	44 (15.4%)	29 (10.1%)	16 (5.6%)	3.75	1.13
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation						3.80	1.10

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The analysis of succession planning progress reveals a moderately positive assessment, with a composite mean of 3.80 (SD=1.10), indicating relatively effective but improvable succession planning practices within the Ministry.

In terms of process structure and definition (SP1), the positive response rate is 70.7%, with a mean score of 3.78 (SD=1.10). While this suggests a generally well-structured process, the 14.7% neutral responses and 14.7% disagreement indicate room for improvement and some process gaps. Resource allocation (SP2) shows a similar pattern, with 70.3% positive responses and a mean of 3.80 (SD=1.09), indicating adequate but not optimal resource allocation. The 15.7% neutral responses suggest uncertainty about resource adequacy.

Successor identification and development (SP3 & SP5) receive the highest ratings, with a mean score of 3.92 (SD=1.08) for successor identification and 3.89 (SD=1.07) for training provision. The combined positive responses exceed 74%, demonstrating strength in talent identification and development. However, implementation and timeline management (SP4) show lower ratings, with 67.9% positive responses and a mean of 3.74 (SD=1.11). The higher neutral responses (16.8%) suggest a need for clearer implementation timelines.

Employee engagement and communication (SP6 & SP8) emerge as areas needing significant improvement. Employee involvement (SP6) receives the

lowest mean score of 3.69 (SD=1.13), indicating a need for greater participation and enhanced engagement. Communication effectiveness (SP8) is rated moderately at 3.75 (SD=1.13), suggesting room for improved information sharing and enhanced transparency.

The findings highlight areas of strength in the Ministry's succession planning practices, including successor identification, development programs, and monitoring systems. However, the results also identify areas for improvement, such as employee involvement, timeline management, and communication.

Statistical analysis reveals consistent response patterns, with standard deviations ranging from 1.07 to 1.13, indicating reliable measurement across items. The pattern analysis shows higher scores in technical aspects and lower scores in participatory elements, consistent with organizational hierarchy patterns.

4.4.5 Employee Performance

The analysis of employee performance shows a notably strong positive trend with a composite mean of 4.06 (SD=0.96), indicating high performance levels within the Ministry. The data shows that performance standards, as measured by meeting expectations (4.10, SD=0.92) and quality work delivery (4.08, SD=0.97), have over 80% positive responses with only about 7-8% negative responses, demonstrating high performance standards.

Table 7: Analysis of Employee Performance Items

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
EP1: Meeting/exceeding performance expectations	105 (36.7%)	132 (46.2%)	28 (9.8%)	15 (5.2%)	6 (2.1%)	4.10	0.92
EP2: Regular feedback and recognition	95 (33.2%)	128 (44.8%)	35 (12.2%)	18 (6.3%)	10 (3.5%)	3.98	1.00
EP3: Effective workload management	98 (34.3%)	130 (45.5%)	32 (11.2%)	17 (5.9%)	9 (3.1%)	4.02	0.98
EP4: Active skill enhancement	108 (37.8%)	125 (43.7%)	31 (10.8%)	14 (4.9%)	8 (2.8%)	4.09	0.96
EP5: High initiative and project contribution	102 (35.7%)	129 (45.1%)	33 (11.5%)	15 (5.2%)	7 (2.4%)	4.06	0.94
EP6: Effective collaboration and communication	100 (35.0%)	131 (45.8%)	32 (11.2%)	16 (5.6%)	7 (2.4%)	4.05	0.95
EP7: Consistent high-quality work delivery	106 (37.1%)	127 (44.4%)	30 (10.5%)	15 (5.2%)	8 (2.8%)	4.08	0.97
EP8: Commitment to continuous improvement	110 (38.5%)	126 (44.1%)	29 (10.1%)	13 (4.5%)	8 (2.8%)	4.11	0.95
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation						4.06	0.96

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Professional development, including skill enhancement (4.09, SD=0.96) and a strong focus on continuous improvement (4.11, SD=0.95), shows a strong commitment to employee development, with over 81% positive responses. Work management, with a mean of 4.02 (SD=0.98) and 79.8% positive responses, indicates effective workload handling. Initiative and collaboration, rated at 4.06 (SD=0.94) and 4.05 (SD=0.95) respectively, shows strong teamwork and proactivity. The only area with relatively lower, though still strong, ratings is feedback and recognition at 3.98 (SD=1.00), with 78% positive responses, indicating a need for improved feedback systems.

The areas of excellence include continuous improvement, with the highest mean score of 4.11, reflecting a strong development orientation and positive learning culture; performance standards, with a very high rating of 4.10, showing consistent expectation meeting and strong quality delivery; and skill enhancement, with a high rating of 4.09, indicating active development pursuit and strong learning engagement. The areas for enhancement include feedback systems, with the lowest mean score of 3.98, suggesting a need for improved

recognition and enhanced feedback mechanisms, and workload management, with a relatively lower rating of 4.02, indicating potential for optimization and efficiency improvement.

The consistently low standard deviations, ranging from 0.92 to 1.00, indicate high consistency and very reliable measurements. The strong positive skew across items and very low negative response rates suggest high internal consistency and a high-performing workforce. The findings demonstrate exceptionally strong employee performance within the Ministry, characterized by high performance standards, a strong development orientation, effective operational practices, and a good collaborative culture. While current performance levels are very high, targeted improvements in feedback systems, recognition mechanisms, and workload management could further enhance overall employee performance and achieve even higher levels of excellence.

Hypothesis Testing Correlation Analysis

Table 8: Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2
1. Succession Planning Practices	1	0.574**
2. Employee Performance	0.574**	1

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8 shows a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.574$ between succession-planning practices and employee performance, which means that the two variables move together in a moderately strong, positive direction: units reporting more systematic succession activities (e.g., talent mapping, mentoring, leadership-

development tracks) also tend to record higher performance scores. The double asterisks indicate this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed), so there is less than a 1 % probability that such a correlation would appear in the sample if no association existed in the population. While the finding

supports the idea that better succession planning is linked to improved employee outcomes, the analysis is correlational; therefore, it does not by itself establish that succession practices cause higher performance, nor does it rule out the influence of other unmeasured factors such as organizational culture or resource availability.

Succession Planning Progress and Employee Performance

The regression analysis indicates that Succession Planning Progress has a significant impact on Employee Performance. The R-square value of 0.329 suggests that 32.9% of the variance in Employee Performance can be explained by Succession Planning Progress. The ANOVA table shows that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 130.305, p < 0.001$).

Table 9: Regression Analysis for Succession Planning Progress and Employee Performance Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	0.574	0.329	0.327	0.821	
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	87.880	1	87.880	130.305	0.000
Residual	178.720	284	0.674		
Total	266.600	285			
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.517	0.194		7.820	0.000
Succession Planning Progress	0.659	0.058	0.574	11.415	0.000

The coefficient table reveals that Succession Planning Progress has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance ($B = 0.659, p < 0.001$). For every unit increase in Succession Planning Progress, Employee Performance is expected to increase by 0.659 units. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is rejected, and it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between Succession Planning Progress and Employee Performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study achieved an excellent 94.4 % response rate (retirees = 94.7 %, current staff = 94.3 %), well above the 70 % threshold recommended for robust survey research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Respondents were predominantly male (61.2 %) and well-educated (84 % held at least a bachelor's degree), with a balanced spread of age and tenure, ensuring that findings reflect the Ministry's actual workforce profile. Descriptively, succession-planning practices were rated "moderately positive" (composite $\bar{x} = 3.80, SD = 1.10$), with successor identification and training strongest ($\bar{x} = 3.92$ and 3.89 , respectively) and employee involvement and communication weakest ($\bar{x} = 3.69$ and 3.75). By contrast, employee performance levels were high ($\bar{x} = 4.06, SD = 0.96$), especially on continuous improvement ($\bar{x} = 4.11$) and meeting expectations ($\bar{x} = 4.10$), though feedback and recognition lagged slightly ($\bar{x} = 3.98, SD = 0.98$).

Inferentially, succession-planning progress emerged as a significant predictor of performance: it explained 32.9 % of the variance in employee performance ($R^2 = 0.329, F = 130.305, p < 0.001$) and each

one-unit improvement in succession-planning scores raised performance by 0.659 units ($B = 0.659, p < 0.001$). These statistics confirm that while staff already perform strongly, better-structured, better-communicated, and more participatory succession processes can still deliver substantive performance gains. The consistency of responses (item SDs ≈ 1.0) further strengthens confidence in these conclusions (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

Recommendations

First, formalise and deepen succession planning. Management should (a) publish clear implementation timelines, (b) earmark dedicated budgets, (c) broaden employee participation in identifying successors, and (d) institute bi-annual communication updates on plan status. Given the demonstrated effect size ($B = 0.659, p < 0.001$), even incremental improvements in these areas are likely to yield appreciable gains in output quality and goal attainment. Regular audits using the eight succession-planning indicators applied in this study will help track progress and maintain accountability.

Second, complement succession initiatives with wider performance-support measures. The Ministry should strengthen feedback and recognition systems currently the lowest-scoring performance item ($\bar{x} = 3.98$) by adopting quarterly 360-degree reviews and introducing non-monetary recognition schemes. Workload-management tools (e.g., digital dashboards) can address efficiency gaps ($\bar{x} = 4.02$), while continuous-learning policies should leverage the high educational profile of staff and retirees alike by pairing serving employees with recent retirees for targeted mentoring sessions. Collectively, these steps will reinforce the high-performance culture already evident and ensure

sustainable knowledge transfer as more employees approach retirement.

Suggestions for Further Research

- i. Future research should track the same cohorts of employees over several years to determine whether enhancements in succession-planning practices continue to raise performance or whether the observed effect plateaus or diminishes with time. Such a design would distinguish short-term gains from sustained organisational learning and reveal lag effects that a cross-sectional survey cannot capture.
- ii. Replicating the study in other South Sudanese ministries or in private-sector organisations of similar size would test the generalizability of the 32.9 % explanatory power attributed to succession planning. Comparative work could uncover structural or cultural factors unique to the public sector that amplify or dampen the knowledge-transfer effect, informing context-specific policy decisions.
- iii. Given that employee involvement and communication scored lowest among succession-planning items, in-depth qualitative methods (focus groups, semi-structured interviews) should probe why staff feel only moderately engaged.
- iv. Subsequent studies could introduce constructs such as organisational culture, digital knowledge-management tools, and feedback-and-recognition systems as potential moderators or mediators between succession-planning progress and performance. Structural-equation modelling would clarify whether these factors strengthen, weaken or channel the direct effect identified in the present regression model.

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Cite This Article: Ruth Mitalo & Deng Atem Akok Aleu (2025). Impact of Succession Planning Practices on Employee Performance of the Ministry of Public Service in Juba, South Sudan. *East African Scholars J Econ Bus Manag*, 8(7), 237-247.
