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The effect of professional development on competitive advantage

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Abstract

One of the most important aspects of talent management is acknowledging that humans are the driving force behind organizations by utilizing resources to fulfill the requirements of customers. On the other hand, talent management must contend with increasing difficulties in the banking industry because of the intense competition for qualified people. The global talent race is intensified as a result of globalization, which makes talent shortages worse because skilled people are looking for opportunities all over the world. The purpose of the study was to investigate the connection between professional development and competitive advantage. A case study technique was utilized, and it was directed towards 146 people working at the KCB headquarters. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and linear regression were utilized in the analysis of the primary data that was gathered through the dissemination of a questionnaire. According to the findings, there was a statistically significant positive correlation (r = 0.827; p-value = 0.000), such that professional development was responsible for explaining 68.4% of the variance in competitive advantage. According to the findings of the study, one way to improve the competitiveness of commercial banks is to make investments in professional development. The consequences of this extend to the optimization of staff management in Kenya's commercial banking industry as well as the informing of regulatory frameworks.

Keywords: Competitive advantage, Professional development, Talent management.

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1. Introduction of the Study

In the current dynamic global commerce market, the competitive advantage of commercial banks is closely linked to the professional development of their staff [1]. This symbiotic relationship highlights the essential role of human capital in the performance and sustainability of financial organizations. The implications of professional development programs for the competitive edge of commercial banks have garnered significant attention, particularly in emerging nations such as Kenya, where the financial sector is rapidly evolving.

Kenya, a significant participant in the East African economic bloc, possesses a robust banking sector characterized by a combination of local and international enterprises. Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) ranks among the largest and most influential financial institutions in the country. Analyzing the effects of professional development programs within KCB and other commercial banks in Kenya is essential for understanding wider trends in the financial sector of the region.

Professional growth in banking is of paramount importance on a global scale. Globalization facilitates the movement of talent and capital across national borders; consequently, banks must cultivate workforces equipped with the skills required to navigate complex financial landscapes. To enhance creativity, adaptability, and efficiency in a competitive global market, banks must prioritize talent development, as stated by McKinsey & Company ("How Banks Can Accelerate Talent Development"). This global imperative highlights the importance of examining the alignment of Kenyan banks' professional development programs with international best practices to maintain competitiveness.

Kenya serves as a significant economic entity within the East African Community (EAC), which comprises six member states. The competitiveness among commercial banks in the region has intensified as a result of the harmonization of financial regulations and the encouragement of cross-border trade within the EAC. Banks must prioritize the professional development of their staff to differentiate themselves from competitors and increase market share. The African Development Bank Group conducted research titled "East African Community: Human Capital Development and Regional Integration," highlighting the importance of human capital development in fostering economic growth and regional integration within the EAC [2, 3].

The local level in Kenya presents specific opportunities and challenges that affect the professional development landscape of the banking industry. Rapid demographic shifts, urban development, and technological advancements are altering consumer preferences and market dynamics. The knowledge and skills required by banking professionals are evolving due to legislative changes aimed at enhancing risk management, transparency, and financial inclusion. The Central Bank of Kenya's Banking Sector Charter emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and development to ensure the delivery of high-quality financial services ("Banking Sector Charter: January 2019").

This study investigates the impact of professional development programs on Kenya Commercial Bank's competitive advantage and its implications for the broader banking sector in the country, considering various international, regional, and local factors. This research examines the functioning of KCB's professional development programs and identifies strategies to overcome challenges that enable banks to thrive in a competitive market.

1.1. Commercial Banks in Kenya

Kenya is recognized in East Africa as a center for foreign investment in the banking sector, especially in relation to neighboring countries. The banking sector is essential in Kenya's financial landscape, primarily due to its significant role in financial intermediation, particularly in light of the limited development of the capital market. Kenya distinguishes itself from numerous other countries in the region by offering a diverse range of financial institutions and markets, which include banks, insurance companies, stock and bond markets, as well as various financial products [4].

The banking sector in Kenya has received commendation for its substantial size and diversification, surpassing benchmarks established in other East African economies [5]. About 40% of the core capital within the commercial banking sector is derived from foreign-based banks, highlighting its global importance. Despite significant increases in profitability, asset base, return on assets, and return on equity, the overall performance of commercial banks in Kenya demonstrates inconsistency, as noted by the Central Bank of Kenya [6]. The performance measures of the top five banks exhibit significant discrepancies when compared to those of the bottom five banks, with the former showing strong and positive ratios relative to the latter.

Challenges continue to exist within the industry, highlighted by a decline in profit before tax in 2014, with several banks reporting aggregate losses [6]. There is increasing pressure from the government and consumers to reduce effective interest rates on lending products. In 2012, the Kenya Bankers Association advocated for the disclosure of the total cost of credit to enable borrowers to make informed decisions by comparing loan products from different lenders on a standardized basis. Evaluating financial performance in the banking sector requires an analysis of efficiency in enhancing earnings via market share expansion [7]. The financial performance of an organization is determined by a combination of policies, managerial decisions, liquidity, asset management, and debt management [8]. Internal factors unique to individual banks and external macroeconomic variables are essential in influencing bank profitability [9].

In summary, the banking sector in Kenya, exemplified by institutions like Kenya Commercial Bank, navigates a multifaceted environment influenced by domestic, regional, and international factors. Addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities in professional development is essential for maintaining and improving the competitive advantage of commercial banks within Kenya's changing financial ecosystem.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Talent management is fundamentally about acknowledging that organizations succeed due to their employees, who leverage corporate resources to provide essential products and services to clients. The quality of an organization's workforce directly influences its competitive advantage. In Kenya's banking sector, where firms compete for a limited talent pool, effective management of human capital is crucial. The performance of organizations is more dependent on the utilization of human capital than on physical capital. Talent management at KCB is essential for the bank's future preparedness, as it involves acquiring the appropriate talents to effectively navigate dynamic environments and maintain a competitive advantage.

Talent scarcity represents a significant challenge across various industries, arising from a discrepancy between the skills of the available labor force and the demand for advanced talents by enterprises. Organizations must take proactive measures to address the talent shortage in order to maintain a competitive edge. Globalization has broadened the opportunities for skilled workers to pursue employment internationally, thereby increasing global competition for talent. There is increasing examination of talent recruitment, retention, development, and management practices to effectively attract and retain top talent.

Many studies have examined the relationship between talent management and competitive advantage, predominantly concentrating on developed nations. There exists a significant research gap concerning Kenyan commercial banks, particularly focusing on KCB. This study aims to investigate the impact of personnel management on KCB's competitive advantage through empirical analysis, providing insights into the dynamics of talent management within the Kenyan banking context.

1.3. Objectives

To determine the effect of employees' professional development on KCB's competitive advantage.

1.4. Research Hypothesis

The study sought to test the following research hypothesis.

H_{o1}: There is no significant effect of employees' professional development on KCB's competitive advantage.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study's findings will offer important insights for commercial banks in Kenya regarding the role of talent management in enhancing employee morale. Commercial banks are increasingly acknowledging the importance of talent management. This research will highlight the relationship between talent management and the competitive advantage of the organization. This study provides commercial banks in Kenya with an in-depth understanding of talent management strategies, including talent attraction, reward management, professional development, and feedback mechanisms. Effective implementation of these strategies can enhance employee morale and subsequently improve overall organizational performance in banks.

The study findings will provide insights for top management in commercial banks, clarifying which elements of talent management are most strongly associated with the organization's competitive advantage. This insight will allow banks to optimize their talent management strategies, potentially decreasing reliance on expensive independent research initiatives.

This study's significance extends beyond Kenya, offering benefits to other developing African countries, especially those within the East African community that share analogous cultural, economic, and political contexts. Prospective clients aiming to make informed decisions regarding their choice of commercial bank will benefit from the study's findings.

In conclusion, due to the limited availability of local data on this subject, the study will provide a significant resource for scholars and researchers interested in exploring the connection between talent management and organizational performance within the banking sector.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The study draws upon the Self-concept Theory of Career Development as its theoretical framework.

2.2. Self-Concept Theory of Career Development

In the realm of understanding job choice and development, the self-concept theory of career advancement is a notable framework that has gained significant attention [10]. According to Super, an individual's self-concept, which is formed by a variety of elements including personal experiences, environment, and values, is the foundation upon which professional development and career choices are built. When an individual is able to integrate their professional growth with their career self-concept, it has a significant impact on the effectiveness of the development. Super emphasizes that when individuals engage with new experiences and opportunities, they evolve their work interests, seek new pathways for self-expression, and integrate these changes into their career choices [11]. This is because individuals are becoming more open to new experiences and chances.

In this study, the Self-Concept Theory of Career Development sheds light on the relationship between employee professional development and the competitive advantage of Kenyan commercial banks. Kenya Commercial Bank is used as an example to illustrate this relationship. This hypothesis focuses on the ways in which the self-perceptions of employees have an effect on their engagement in activities that contribute to their professional growth. Those who have a healthy self-concept are more likely to take an active role in these programs because they view them as opportunities for personal development and professional advancement. As employees make improvements in their knowledge and abilities, they become more prepared to meet the demands of the industry.

In addition, the theory places primary emphasis on the significance of self-awareness and self-efficacy in the process of career growth. Employees who have a clear understanding of their own capabilities and limitations are in a better position to make the most of opportunities for professional growth. The Kenya Commercial Bank may be able to empower its workers by aligning its training programs with the needs of its employees. This would result in increased job satisfaction, performance, and engagement, which would provide the bank an advantage over its competitors in the banking industry.

2.3. Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework delineates the interplay between independent and dependent variables. Independent variables are considered the drivers of changes in the dependent variable [12]. Figure 1 portrays the envisioned relationship between the, professional development and the feedback mechanism) and organizational competitive advantage.

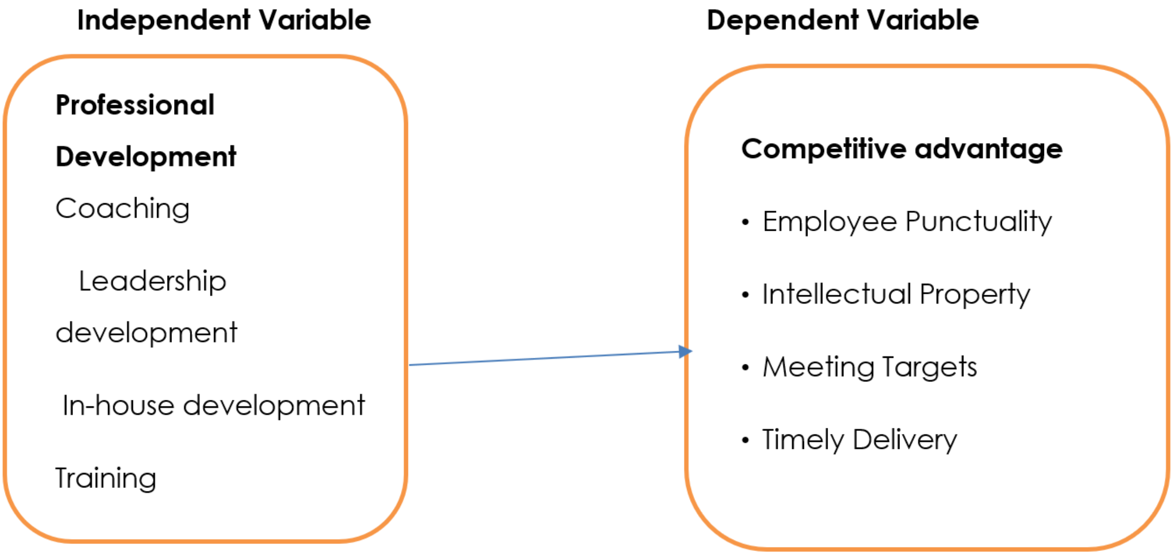

Figure 1.
Conceptual Framework.

2.4. Professional Development and Competitive Advantage

Coaching programs aimed at enhancing employee skills and competencies significantly influence competitive advantage. Coaching improves employee productivity, problem-solving skills, and decision-making capabilities through tailored guidance and support. Employees develop expertise in achieving objectives and delivering high-quality work punctually, thereby enhancing the organization's competitive advantage.

Funding programs for leadership development enables organizations to cultivate a pool of competent and effective leaders. Strong leadership fosters a culture of creativity, responsibility, and teamwork, which is essential for maintaining a competitive advantage. Effective leaders motivate their employees to achieve higher performance, protect intellectual property, and ensure timely delivery of products and services, thereby enhancing the organization's competitive advantage.

Internal development initiatives tailored to the specific needs and objectives of the organization provide employees with opportunities to acquire new skills and knowledge. These initiatives promote staff retention and loyalty while enhancing performance levels. In-house developers enhance an organization's competitive advantage by assisting staff in achieving objectives, providing innovative solutions, and delivering high-quality work within deadlines.

Training programs focused on technical, operational, and interpersonal skills are essential for equipping personnel with the necessary competencies and knowledge to excel in their roles. Employees who receive adequate training demonstrate a higher likelihood of punctuality, consistent goal achievement, and the production of high-quality work within designated timelines. Furthermore, training fosters a culture of adaptability and continuous development, enabling the organization to maintain competitiveness and respond effectively to market changes.

The implementation of professional development programs enhances an organization's competitive advantage by improving employee punctuality, protecting intellectual property, achieving objectives, and ensuring the timely delivery of goods and services. By allocating resources to coaching, leadership development, internal development programs, and training, organizations can develop a skilled and motivated workforce capable of driving innovation, productivity, and success in a dynamic business environment.

2.5. Competitive Advantage

Employee punctuality: Timeliness serves as an indicator of an organization's efficiency and reliability in meeting its commitments. Organizations that prioritize punctuality experience enhanced process efficiency, timely project delivery, and improved customer satisfaction. Punctuality among employees minimizes disruptions, enhances confidence among customers and stakeholders, and elevates overall productivity.

Intellectual Property Protection: Trade secrets, copyrights, patents, and trademarks represent valuable assets classified as intellectual property. Companies that effectively manage their intellectual property gain a competitive advantage by protecting their inventions, products, and brand reputation. Intellectual property protection maintains market exclusivity for products, deters competitors from replication or imitation, and fosters innovation and investment in research and development.

Establishing Objectives: To sustain a competitive advantage, it is essential to consistently meet or exceed established objectives. Setting and achieving ambitious goals demonstrates an organization's operational excellence, high performance, and focus on customer needs. Achieving objectives enhances the organization's credibility, cultivates trust among stakeholders, and positions it as a reliable partner in the marketplace. The culture of accountability, teamwork, and continuous development fosters long-term success.

Timely Delivery: The fulfillment of client demands and the maintenance of a competitive advantage are contingent upon the timely delivery of goods or services. Organizations that prioritize timely delivery demonstrate agility, responsiveness, and a commitment to client satisfaction. Timely delivery enhances client satisfaction, retention, and loyalty, thereby promoting positive word-of-mouth referrals and repeat business. Furthermore, it enhances market share, strengthens the company's reputation, and differentiates it from competitors.

2.6. Empirical Literature Review

2.6.1. Professional Development and Competitive Advantage

A 2010 study by CIPD on learning and talent development revealed that in-house development programs achieved a 56% effectiveness rating, while coaching provided by line managers was rated at 51%. These practices were identified as the most effective for professional development. The study further emphasized the significance of e-learning as a critical component of professional development. Senior managers and the human resource department have been recognized as essential contributors to the effective implementation of courses and the strategic planning of the learning process. This survey-based research indicated that organizations predominantly concentrated on cultivating leadership capabilities (65%), enhancing frontline management skills (55%), and fostering business acumen (51%) to achieve their strategic objectives [13].

Azara and Syed's research on employee training and organizational performance revealed a significant positive correlation between the two variables [14]. Nevertheless, the research did not investigate the aspect of employee morale. The study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative research designs, utilizing questionnaires as the primary instruments for data collection. In a similar vein, [15] conducted a cross-sectional study focusing on Malaysian multinational companies, revealing a positive and statistically significant correlation between talent development and organizational success [15]. The study indicated a correlation coefficient of 0.728 and a p-value of 0.000 at a significance level of 0.05, demonstrating a strong relationship between talent development initiatives and organizational success.

Talent development encompasses a structured approach aimed at enhancing an organization, its workforce, stakeholders, and affiliated groups through intentional and unplanned educational initiatives. The primary objective of this process is to achieve and maintain a competitive edge for the organization [16, 17]. As organizations persistently integrate emerging technologies, innovative business growth frameworks, and adaptive market strategies, the workforce experiences a continual transformation. Comprehending the influence of talent development on competitive advantage is essential for the effective functioning of the Co-operative Bank within the marketplace.

Organizations that successfully execute professional development initiatives place a high priority on their employees. This process involves the identification of employees in need of professional development, the assessment of the requisite level of development, and the specification of the duration for the associated learning activities [16]. Moreover, organizations that implement outstanding professional development programs demonstrate proficiency in gathering employee feedback concerning areas for improvement and are skilled in conveying these identified needs back to the employees in a clear and insightful manner.

Davis et al. emphasized the essential importance of recruiting and developing skilled personnel in the pursuit of organizational goals [18, 19] emphasized the importance of professional development, particularly for organizations operating in rapidly evolving environments to maintain their competitive edge. In dynamic environments, professional development facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge and skills within organizations, thereby ensuring the sustained delivery of high-quality outcomes [19]. Professional development has become an essential component of talent management on a global scale, functioning as a strategic approach to reduce leadership gaps and cultivate high-potential individuals for future positions. Nonetheless, certain organizations view professional development primarily as a bureaucratic obligation instead of recognizing it as a strategic asset. In the context of the ongoing global economic downturn, the significance of recognizing and cultivating high-caliber talent for essential positions has grown markedly.

Professional development involves the strategic approach of organizations to guarantee the presence of individuals possessing the necessary qualifications and experience as needed [20]. The human resource department is essential in the processes of attracting and evaluating individuals who possess significant potential within the organization. Furthermore, they are responsible for cultivating the talent pool through the provision of training in competencies that correspond with the company's current and prospective requirements, thus optimizing their abilities to improve organizational performance [21, 22].

In their 2012 report, Johansson and Adams [23] analyzed the role of government in training initiatives related to talent development in sub-Saharan Africa [23]. The research examined the difficulties faced by African governments in the execution of training programs, highlighting a significant focus on policy formulation rather than on effective, practical implementation. The findings highlighted Africa's persistent difficulties in tackling talent development issues, especially within the informal sector, which is characterized by a high prevalence of employment opportunities arising from the limited availability of white-collar positions. The research highlighted the imperative for reforms aimed at enhancing the efficacy of training programs within both the public and private sectors. Furthermore, Johansson and Adams [23] conducted a literature review that underscored the negative effects of inadequate professional development on organizational performance, thereby stressing the necessity for effective strategies to address this issue. Lockwood [24] identified talent development as essential for sustaining competitive advantage in organizations. The research identified several challenges encountered by HR managers and business leaders. These challenges include the development of managerial capabilities, the retention of high-performing employees, the establishment of succession pools, and the management of talent shortages.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

The research utilized a case study methodology to achieve an in-depth comprehension of talent management and its association with competitive advantage in the context of Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB). A case study design serves as an effective method for investigating intricate phenomena within their authentic contexts, yielding valuable insights into particular organizational processes and strategies (34). The research concentrated on KCB to elucidate the intricacies of how talent management practices facilitate the maintenance of a competitive advantage within the banking industry.

3.2. Target Population

In the context of research, the target population denotes the particular group from which information is desired. Ngechu [25] characterizes the population as a clearly delineated group of individuals, elements, events, or households that are the focus of the investigation, with the objective of generalizing the findings of the study, Nzuve [26]. In a similar vein, Mugenda and Mugenda [27] characterize the target population as the specific group to which the researcher aims to generalize the findings of the study Mugenda and Mugenda [27]. This study focused on a target population of 146 individuals who hold top and mid-level management positions at the KCB head office. The selection was predicated on the understanding that these employees are integral to the management and performance of the organization. Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the distribution of the population.

Table 1.
Target Population.

No.	Department	Population
1.	Credit	42
2.	Sales	58
3.	Human resource	46
	Total	146

Source: HRM Record (2021).

3.3. Research Instrument

This research employed primary data collection techniques, particularly through the administration of questionnaires. A questionnaire consists of a collection of items or enquiries that require respondents to offer written responses or answers [28]. The questionnaire utilized in this research incorporated a five-point Likert scale, which spans from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The study utilized questionnaires to mitigate interviewer bias and provided respondents with sufficient time to read and answer the questions [12].

3.4. Validity of the Research Instrument

Validity denotes the degree to which a measurement instrument effectively captures the specific construct it is designed to assess. Mugenda and Mugenda [27] emphasize that validity refers to the extent to which research findings accurately respond to the research questions and evaluate the study's hypotheses [27]. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was utilized to assess validity, yielding results that surpassed the threshold of 0.4, thereby indicating a level of reliability. Please consult Table 2 for comprehensive details.

Table 2.
Validity of the Instrument.

Items/scale	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)	Sig.
Professional Development	0.643	0.000
Competitive Advantage	0.791	0.000

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that the instrument demonstrated validity, as all KMO values exceeded the threshold of 0.4.

3.5. Reliability of the Research Instrument

Reliability evaluates the consistency of outcomes derived from instrument tests, quantifying the degree to which a research instrument yields uniform data across multiple trials, while being affected by random error. The reliability of the research instrument was assessed through the application of Cronbach's coefficient alpha, which was computed distinctly for both even and uneven items, taking into account the sequence of the questionnaire item arrangement. According to Fraenkel and Wallen [6], a psychometric instrument is considered acceptable for use when it achieves a value of 0.70 or higher based on a substantial sample size [29].
Table 3 summarizes the results for reliability analysis.

Table 3.
Reliability Coefficient Index.

Items	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
All items on the questionnaire	0.956	16
Professional Development	0.823	9
Competitive Advantage	0.841	7

The reliability of the questionnaire was affirmed, as evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha reliability index exceeding 0.7 for the entire scale.

3.6. Data Analysis Procedures

This section delineates the methodology employed for data analysis. Following the collection of questionnaires from participants, the researcher evaluated their completeness and commenced the data analysis process. Descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to assess the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. Data coding was utilized to facilitate appropriate grouping and categorization for subsequent analysis. A correlation analysis, which serves as a statistical method for assessing the linear relationship between two variables [30], was performed. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) posits that there exists a linear relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable. This research investigated the existence of a relationship by employing Pearson's correlation coefficient, utilizing a 95% confidence level to evaluate both the null and alternative hypotheses.

H0: $r = 0$

Against

H1: $r \neq 0$

The hypothesis was tested using the t-statistic for the correlation coefficient. The test statistic for the test was given by.

$$t = \frac{r}{\sqrt{\frac{1-r^2}{n-2}}}$$

The test statistic adheres to a t-distribution characterized by n – 2 degrees of freedom. Rejecting the null hypothesis signifies the presence of a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

The analysis utilized simple linear regression to evaluate the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable. Additionally, a multiple linear regression model was implemented to construct the research framework. The regression analysis assessed the adequacy of the model in relation to the data set. The R value represents the degree of correlation between variables, while R2 quantifies the extent of the independent variable's influence on the dependent variable.

The F-test, associated with the Fisher distribution, evaluates the significance and the degree of difference between the regression mean and the error mean. This analysis is performed at a 5 percent significance level, corresponding to a 95% confidence interval. The present study employed analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the evaluation of the data. In a comparable manner, the t-test statistic assessed the level of predictive significance of the model. When the t-statistic is situated within the range of -2 to +2, the relationship is considered insignificant, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. If the t-value was greater than +2 or less than -2, the null hypothesis was rejected. A p-value exceeding 0.05 suggests that the model is not significant in accounting for variations in the dependent variable. The multiple linear regression model is articulated in Equation 1.

$$Y = \beta 01 + \beta 1X1 + e \qquad (1)$$

Where:

Y = Competitive advantage β01 = The Y intercept.

X1 = Professional development.

βi = Is the regression coefficients which measures the change induced by Xi on Y.

e= Error term.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Response Rate

A total of 146 questionnaires were disseminated to participants, resulting in the return of 108 completed responses, which were subsequently employed in the analysis. Please consult Table 4 for a comprehensive summary of this information.

Table 4.
Questionnaire Return Rate.

Category of Respondents	Questionnaires Issued	Questionnaires Returned	Percentage Returned (%)
Credit	42	33	78.57
Sales	58	43	74.14
Human Resources	46	32	70
Total	146	108	73.97

Table 4 presents the data regarding the distribution of 146 questionnaires, of which 108 were returned and 38 were not. This yields a response rate of 73.97%, a figure that is considered adequate for the purposes of this study. Marton [31] asserts that a response rate greater than 70% is sufficient for a descriptive study [3]. The analysis utilized a total of 108 returned questionnaires for its execution.

4.2. Demographic Information

Table 5 illustrates the distribution of respondents based on their education level, while Table 6 presents their years of work experience.

Table 5.
Education Level.

	Category	Frequency	Percent
Valid	PhD	0	0
	Masters	20	18.5
	Degree	76	70.4
	Diploma	8	7.4
	Certificate	4	3.7
	Total	108	100

Table 5 illustrates that the predominant group of respondents consisted of degree holders, accounting for 76 individuals or 70.4% of the total. This was followed by those holding master's degrees, numbering 20 or 18.5%. Additionally, diploma holders comprised 8 respondents, representing 7.4%, while certificate holders totaled 4, equating to 3.7% of the sample. The analysis was essential for evaluating the respondents' ability to interact with the questionnaire.

Table 6.
Years of Work Experience.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 – 5 Years	60	55.6
	6 – 10 Years	16	14.8
	Above 10 Years	32	29.6
	Total	108	100.0

Table 6 presents data showing that a significant portion of respondents, specifically 60 individuals or 55.6%, possessed 1 to 5 years of experience in their roles at the bank. This group is followed by those with over 10 years of experience, totaling 32 respondents or 29.6%. Lastly, the category of respondents with 6 to 10 years of work experience comprises 16 individuals, accounting for 14.8% of the total. The analysis conducted was crucial for evaluating the respondents' awareness of the organization's human resource policies.

4.3. Effect of Professional Development on Competitive Advantage of KCB

The objective of the study was to evaluate the influence of professional development on the competitive advantage of KCB. Participants evaluated statements regarding professional development using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where a score of 1 represented "strongly disagree" and a score of 5 denoted "strongly agree." The ratings' descriptive statistics are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.
Descriptive Statistics for Professional Development.

Statement	SA F (%)	A F (%)	NS F (%)	D F %)	SD F(%)	Total F (%)	Mean	Std. D.
Appropriate learning and development strategies have been put in place.	52(48)	44(41)	4(4)	8(7)	0(0)	108(100)	4.50	0.857
Training needs analysis is carried out before conducting training.	48(44)	52(48)	8(7)	0(0)	0(0)	108(100)	4.37	0.620
Bank employees acquire new knowledge and talents and master new ways of doing things.	56(52)	44(41)	8(7)	0(0)	0(0)	108(100)	4.54	0.631
An in-house development program is commonly used.	64(59)	32(30)	12(11)	0(0)	0(0)	108(100)	4.58	0.690
There is coaching by the line managers in this bank.	64(59)	20(19)	24(22)	0(0)	0(0)	108(100)	4.57	0.827
The bank takes leadership talents and development very seriously.	68(63)	20(19)	16(15)	4(4)	0(0)	108(100)	4.61	0.876
This bank value business talent development.	52(48)	40(37)	8(7)	8(7)	0(0)	108(100)	4.56	0.890
E-learning is of great importance in our bank.	72(67)	32(30)	0(0)	4(4)	0(0)	108(100)	4.69	0.684
Teamwork talents development are emphasized in this bank.	68(63)	28(26)	8(7)	4(4)	0(0)	108(100)	4.58	0.791

Note: Key: SD= Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; NS=Not Sure; A= Agree and SA= Strongly Agree Source (Field Data, 2023).

The findings presented in Table 7 indicate a significant consensus among participants concerning the efficacy of the learning and development strategies implemented at the bank, with a predominant number expressing strong agreement. In a similar vein, participants indicated their concurrence with the bank's methodology for assessing the learning requirements of employees prior to the implementation of training programs. This highlights the notion that investment in employee development improves work quality and strengthens the bank's competitive advantage, aligning with previous research findings [14].

The study indicates a strong consensus among respondents concerning the importance of continuous learning for bank employees and the implementation of in-house development programs. These elements are viewed as crucial for enhancing staff development and maintaining the bank's competitive advantage, aligning with Lockwood's assertion [24].

Additionally, respondents expressed strong agreement regarding the coaching provided by line managers, the bank's commitment to the development of leadership talent, and its prioritization of business talent development. The findings underscore the notion that the growth and development of talent significantly improve service delivery, which is consistent with the emphasis on professional development highlighted by People in Aid [19].

In conclusion, respondents expressed strong agreement regarding the significance of E-learning and the development of teamwork skills within the bank. They indicated that these practices contribute to the enhancement of staff competencies, the improvement of service delivery, and the overall strengthening of the bank's competitive advantage. This aligns with the CIPD [32] assertion that E-learning is an essential element of professional development [13].

Subsequent analysis was performed on the data utilizing Pearson's Correlation to ascertain the presence of a linear relationship between professional development and the competitive advantage of Kenya Commercial Bank. The results are presented comprehensively in Table 8.

Table 8.
Pearson's Correlation Analysis between Professional Development and Competitive Advantage.

		Competitive Advantage
Professional Development	Pearson Correlation	0.827^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	108

Table 8 demonstrates a robust positive correlation (r = 0.827, p = 0.000) that is statistically significant, indicating a relationship between professional development and the competitive advantage of Kenya Commercial Bank. This suggests that professional development plays a vital role in strengthening KCB's competitive advantage. The findings corroborate the research conducted by Azara et al. [14], which revealed a notable and affirmative relationship between training and organizational performance [14].

Furthermore, the study investigated the impact of professional development on KCB's competitive advantage. To do so, the null hypothesis was tested, which stated.

H_{o3}: There is no significant effect of employees' professional development on KCB's competitive advantage.

Simple linear regression was employed for this analysis, and the outcomes are depicted in Table 9.

Table 9.
Regression Coefficients for Professional Development.

R^2	β	F	t	*p*
0.684	0.827	229.275	2.753	0.007

Table 9 demonstrates an adequate alignment of the regression model concerning the relationship between professional development and KCB's competitive advantage. Professional development accounts for 68.4% of KCB's competitive advantage, as indicated by an R2 value of 0.684. The analysis indicates a notable influence of professional development on KCB's competitive advantage, as demonstrated by an F-value of 229.275 (P=0.007). The third null hypothesis, which posited that professional development does not significantly affect KCB's competitive advantage, was rejected based on a t-value of 2.753, which surpassed the critical t-value, and a P-value that was below the 0.05 threshold. In summary, professional development is identified as a critical element that significantly impacts KCB's competitive advantage. The results corroborate the findings of Azara and Syed, who identified a substantial and positive correlation between training and organizational performance [14].

4.4. Competitive Advantage

The objective of the study was also to determine how the four factors already covered relate to the competitive advantage of KCB. The findings are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10.
Descriptive Statistics for Competitive Advantage.

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	NS (%)	D (%	SD (%	Total (%)	Mean	Std. D.
The bank believe talent management increases our competitiveness.	56(52)	40(37)	8(7)	4(4)	0(0)	108(100)	4.57	0.781
The bank's talent retention strategy has led to increased customer satisfaction.	64(59)	32(30)	12(11)	0(0)	0(0)	108(100)	4.50	0.690
Talent management in the bank lead to increased employee productivity.	68(63)	28(26)	12(11)	0(0)	0(0)	108(100)	4.52	0.690
This bank's internal recruitment policy helps uplift employee's morale.	68(63)	28(26)	12(11)	0(0)	0(0)	108(100)	4.52	0.690
This bank's formal Succession planning has contributed to a high targets' achievements.	56(52)	44(41)	8(7)	0(0)	0(0)	108(100)	4.54	0.631
My bank believes when we give employees an interesting and challenging job will increase their productivity.	64(59)	36(33)	4(4)	4(4)	0(0)	108(100)	4.58	0.742
Talent management in this bank has led to increase in employees' punctuality.	72(67)	24(22)	8(7)	4(4)	0(0)	108(100)	4.52	0.791

Note: Key: SD= Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; NS=Not Sure; A= Agree and SA= Strongly Agree.

Table 10 demonstrates that a significant majority of respondents express strong agreement regarding the assertion that talent management contributes to the enhancement of the bank's competitiveness, elevates customer satisfaction, and increases employee productivity. The findings indicate a general agreement that the implementation of effective policies for talent attraction, retention, and internal recruitment plays a significant role in maintaining service quality and enhancing competitive advantage over time. Furthermore, participants express a strong consensus that the implementation of formal succession planning, the provision of challenging job opportunities, and effective talent management practices significantly contribute to improvements in both productivity and punctuality. The findings presented are consistent with prior studies that demonstrate a positive correlation between talent management practices and organizational success [15].

Table 11.
Multiple Linear Regression Model Summary.

R	R^2	Std. error of the estimate
0.904	0.816	0.22438

Table 11 demonstrates adequate alignment in the regression analysis concerning the relationship between professional development and the competitive advantage of KCB. An R^2 value of 0.816 indicates that 81.6% of KCB's competitive advantage can be accounted for by professional development. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by

Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam, which established a positive and significant correlation between talent attraction and organizational success. [15].

Table 12.
Model Summary and Parameter Estimates.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.733	0.195		3.749	0.000
	Professional Development	0.306	0.086	0.295	3.534	0.001

From Table 12, the model regression equation 4.1 was established. $Y = 0.733 + 0.306X1$ (2)

The regression analysis presented in Equation 2 reveals that, when controlling for other variables, the competitive advantage of Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) is estimated to be 0.733 units. Furthermore, a statistically significant positive correlation exists between professional development and KCB's competitive advantage, evidenced by a coefficient of 0.306 (p-value = 0.001). This indicates that an increase of one unit in professional development is associated with a 0.306 enhancement in KCB's competitive advantage. The results align with previous studies conducted by Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramanian, which similarly emphasized a positive and significant correlation between professional development and organizational success [15].

5. Conclusion

The research findings indicate that professional development plays a significant role in shaping the competitive advantage of commercial banks. The findings indicate that effective professional development mechanisms enhance the competitive advantage of commercial banks.

5.1. Recommendations of the Study

The research indicates that, in order to enhance their competitive advantage, commercial banks ought to emphasize professional development. This approach is essential for human resource managers to implement effectively to achieve success. The results highlight the considerable influence of professional development on the competitive advantage of commercial banks, positioning it as the most critical factor when compared to elements such as talent attraction, feedback mechanisms, and reward management.

5.2. Implications of the Study for Research

The findings suggest that, to improve their competitive advantage, commercial banks should prioritize professional development. This approach is crucial for human resource managers to implement effectively in order to attain success. The findings underscore the significant impact of professional development on the competitive advantage of commercial banks, establishing it as the paramount factor in comparison to other elements, including talent attraction, feedback mechanisms, and reward management.

5.3. Implications of the Study for Practice

The findings of the study provide practical implications for strategic planning within Kenyan commercial banks, such as Kenya Commercial Bank. Executives and human resources professionals can leverage the data to strategically prioritize investments in professional development initiatives, thereby enhancing the bank's competitive advantage. The practical implications involve the enhancement of internal growth initiatives, including training, coaching, and leadership development, to ensure alignment with organizational objectives and customer requirements. The study emphasizes the necessity of assessing the effects of professional development on critical performance metrics, including staff productivity, customer satisfaction, and market share, in order to sustain a competitive edge.

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