

Unpacking the Leadership–Performance Nexus: Competence Heterogeneity Utilization as a Statistical Mediator in Selected Central Government Ministries in Kenya

^{1*}Diana Christabel Natecho Wekesa, ²Dr. Susan Wasike & ³Dr. Pamela Eng'airo

^{1,2&3}Department of Business Administration, School of Business, The Catholic University of
Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

*Corresponding Author's Email: dianawekesa@gmail.com

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Abstract

Strategic leadership is consistently associated with public-sector performance, yet the organizational processes accompanying this relationship remain less clear. This study examined whether competence heterogeneity utilization, defined as the perceived presence and functional use of diversity in experience, qualifications, skills, functional backgrounds, and tenure, statistically mediated the association between strategic leadership and organizational performance in three selected central government ministries in Kenya. A pragmatist, cross-sectional mixed-methods design combined questionnaires from 264 employees with 15 key-informant interviews. Strategic leadership was associated with organizational performance ($B = 1.001$, $\beta = .828$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .686$) and competence heterogeneity utilization ($B = 1.003$, $\beta = .773$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .598$). In the joint model, competence heterogeneity utilization remained significant ($B = .195$, $\beta = .209$, $p < .001$), while the leadership coefficient declined to $B = .807$ ($\beta = .667$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .703$). The Sobel test supported a significant indirect association ($z = 3.850$, $p < .001$), representing approximately 19.5% of the total association. Interviews indicated that competence-diverse teams supported decision quality and implementation, although diversity was not consistently utilized. Findings are interpreted as statistical rather than causal mediation.

Keywords: *strategic leadership; competence heterogeneity utilization; organizational performance; statistical mediation; public sector; Kenya*

1. Introduction

The relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance has received extensive scholarly attention across public- and private-sector contexts. Existing evidence generally indicates that strategic leadership practices, including strategic direction setting, participative decision-making, accountability, and adaptive responsiveness, are associated with institutional performance outcomes (Li et al., 2025; Dhlamini, 2025; Haule et al., 2024). However, much of this literature has concentrated on direct relationships and has given less attention to the organizational conditions that may accompany the leadership–performance association (Micheni & Awuor, 2025; Konadu et al., 2024). Examining an indirect pathway is therefore useful for identifying organizational resources that may help explain how leadership and performance are

related, while recognizing that cross-sectional statistical mediation does not establish temporal or causal ordering (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon et al., 1995).

One theoretically plausible organizational condition is competence heterogeneity, referring to variation in employees' experience, qualifications, skills, functional expertise, and tenure (Hambrick et al., 1996; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Lepak & Snell, 1999). Human Capital Theory proposes that the stock and composition of human capital within an organization are important determinants of institutional capacity and performance (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964). In the present study, the questionnaire did not measure workforce composition only; it also assessed whether diverse experience, qualifications, skills, functions, and tenure were perceived to complement task execution, knowledge integration, collaboration, and team performance. The mediator is therefore described as competence heterogeneity utilization (CHU), meaning the perceived presence and functional use of competence diversity. This terminology aligns the construct label with what the instrument actually assessed.

Kenya's central government ministries provide a relevant context for examining this indirect association because their workforces contain considerable variation in education, professional expertise, and tenure (PSC, 2023; Mwaura, 2024). The present study was limited to three purposively selected ministries: the Ministry of Public Service, Human Capital Development and Special Programs; the National Treasury and Economic Planning; and the Ministry of Interior and National Administration. Consequently, the findings are interpreted as evidence from selected ministries rather than as estimates for all ministries or the entire Kenyan public sector. The study examined whether CHU statistically mediated the association between strategic leadership and organizational performance in these selected ministries.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Problem Context and Research Gap

Empirical studies consistently report positive associations between strategic leadership and organizational performance in public-sector institutions, including evidence from African and international contexts (Li et al., 2025; Konadu et al., 2024; Haule et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the organizational conditions accompanying this relationship remain insufficiently examined. This explanatory gap limits the ability of institutional leaders and policymakers to identify which internal resources should be developed alongside leadership capacity (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The gap is salient in Kenya's central government ministries, where performance has remained below established benchmarks despite formal leadership structures and a comparatively qualified workforce (OAG, 2023; PSC, 2023).

The Office of the Auditor-General reported approximately KSh 145 billion in unsupported, irregular, or misallocated expenditure across ministries during the 2022/2023 audit cycle, while the Public Service Commission reported that only 41% of ministries fully achieved annual service-delivery targets (OAG, 2023; PSC, 2023). These shortfalls occurred within institutions that employ personnel with varied qualifications, functional specializations, skills, and tenure profiles. The coexistence of competence diversity and uneven performance suggests that diversity may have value only when it is effectively combined and used in organizational work (Becker, 1964; Hambrick et al., 1996). This study therefore focused on perceived competence heterogeneity utilization rather than assuming that compositional diversity alone constitutes an explanatory mechanism.

Although workforce diversity and human capital have been examined extensively, limited empirical evidence has tested a competence-related mediator in the strategic leadership–performance relationship within Kenya’s central government ministries (Joshi & Roh, 2009; Harrison & Klein, 2007). Existing studies have generally examined leadership effects or workforce competence independently, leaving limited understanding of their joint statistical relationship. The present study addressed this gap by testing an indirect association through CHU using corrected regression estimates and the Sobel test. Because the data were cross-sectional, the resulting mediation pattern is interpreted as statistical mediation rather than proof that leadership temporally causes changes in competence composition or performance.

2.2 Research Objective and Hypothesis

The study was guided by the following objective:

To examine whether competence heterogeneity utilization statistically mediates the association between strategic leadership and organizational performance in selected central government ministries in Kenya.

The following null hypothesis was tested:

H₀: Competence heterogeneity utilization does not significantly mediate the association between strategic leadership and organizational performance in selected central government ministries in Kenya.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Human Capital Theory

This study was anchored in Human Capital Theory, originally advanced by Schultz (1961) and subsequently formalized by Becker (1964). The theory proposes that knowledge, skills, qualifications, and experience embedded within a workforce constitute productive resources capable of generating organizational returns. Investments in education, training, and experiential learning may enhance individual productivity and, when aggregated across the workforce, strengthen organizational capability and performance (Becker, 1964; Lepak & Snell, 1999). Applied to competence diversity, the theory implies that organizations with varied human-capital profiles may have access to a broader pool of problem-solving resources, perspectives, and implementation capabilities than more homogeneous organizations (Hambrick et al., 1996; Harrison & Klein, 2007).

The theory is relevant to the study in three respects. First, human capital is heterogeneous rather than uniform, so differences in educational background, professional expertise, functional specialization, and tenure may provide distinct contributions to decision-making and problem-solving (Becker, 1964; Joshi & Roh, 2009). Second, the productive value of human capital depends on how effectively it is combined and deployed; competence that exists but is not connected to organizational priorities may remain underutilized (Lepak & Snell, 1999; Wright et al., 2001). Third, leadership may shape work allocation, cross-functional collaboration, and the use of specialized expertise. These propositions support examining CHU as an organizational condition statistically associated with both leadership and performance without treating stable workforce composition as an outcome that leadership necessarily causes.

Human Capital Theory therefore provides a basis for expecting an indirect statistical association in which strategic leadership is related to the functional use of diverse competences and CHU is,

in turn, related to organizational performance. This interpretation is deliberately associational because the cross-sectional design cannot establish temporal sequencing (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The theory has also been criticized for emphasizing stocks of productive resources while paying less attention to the organizational processes through which competences are combined, coordinated, and mobilized. The mixed-methods design addressed this limitation by supplementing the quantitative mediation analysis with qualitative evidence on how competence diversity was reportedly used or constrained in the selected ministries (Wright et al., 2001; Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011).

2.4 Empirical Literature

Scholarly interest in mechanisms linking leadership to organizational performance has expanded as researchers increasingly recognize that leadership frequently operates through intermediate organizational processes rather than producing outcomes exclusively through direct effects (Baron and Kenny, 1986; Preacher and Hayes, 2004). Several studies have consequently examined human capital, workforce diversity and team composition as mechanisms through which organizational practices influence performance. However, competence heterogeneity remains comparatively underexamined as a formal mediator within the strategic leadership literature, particularly in public-sector settings.

Hambrick, Cho and Chen (1996) investigated the relationship between top-management-team heterogeneity and competitive behavior among airline firms. Their findings showed that teams characterized by greater diversity in functional background, education and tenure generated more numerous and complex competitive actions, which subsequently influenced firm performance. The study provided important empirical support for viewing competence diversity as more than a descriptive workforce characteristic; rather, it demonstrated that heterogeneity can shape organizational behavior and outcomes (Hambrick et al., 1996). Harrison and Klein (2007) extended the diversity literature by distinguishing among separation, variety and disparity, arguing that the consequences of diversity for organizational performance depend fundamentally on the particular form of diversity present and how it is managed.

Joshi and Roh (2009) conducted a meta-analytic review involving 8,757 teams across 39 studies to examine the relationship between workforce diversity and team performance. Their analysis showed that diversity in task-relevant knowledge and functional expertise was positively associated with performance when work required substantial information processing and integrative problem-solving. These dimensions correspond closely with the competence heterogeneity construct examined in the present study. The findings therefore suggest that workforce heterogeneity can enhance organizational outcomes when the available knowledge and expertise are effectively integrated into task execution. Ployhart and Moliterno (2011) similarly developed a multilevel framework explaining how individual-level human capital resources emerge as unit-level human capital. They proposed that collective capability depends not only on the competences available within a unit but also on the processes through which those competences are combined and mobilized.

Methodological scholarship recommends assessing indirect relationships using regression estimates together with a formal test of the indirect effect. Preacher and Hayes (2004) and Hayes (2018) emphasize resampling-based confidence intervals because the sampling distribution of an indirect effect is often non-normal, while MacKinnon et al. (1995) show the limitations of relying on individual regression coefficients alone. The archived analysis available for this manuscript

contained the regression paths and Sobel statistic but did not contain respondent-level bootstrap output. The present article therefore reports the corrected archived estimates and interprets the indirect association cautiously. A nonparametric bootstrap confidence interval should be added when the respondent-level dataset is re-analysed. Against this methodological background, the study examined whether CHU statistically mediated the strategic leadership–performance association in the three selected ministries.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design, Setting and Sampling

The study adopted a pragmatist philosophy and a cross-sectional mixed-methods correlational design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative component tested statistical associations among strategic leadership, CHU, and organizational performance, while the qualitative component provided contextual accounts of how competence diversity was used in practice. The study was conducted in three purposively selected central government ministries: the Ministry of Public Service, Human Capital Development and Special Programs; the National Treasury and Economic Planning; and the Ministry of Interior and National Administration. The accessible population was 1,240 employees. A sample of 302 was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level (Kothari, 2014). A two-stage stratified random procedure first stratified employees by hierarchical level and then used simple random selection within strata. Of 302 questionnaires administered, 264 usable responses were returned, giving an 87.4% response rate.

Fifteen key informants were purposively selected from senior and technical officers with strategic oversight or specialized knowledge relevant to leadership, human resources, programme delivery, monitoring and evaluation, finance, audit, information technology, procurement, legal, communications, and administrative functions. The semi-structured interview guide covered strategic planning, leadership decision pathways, competence-diversity management, accountability mechanisms, and alignment between leadership practices and performance goals. The interviews were conducted privately; with participant permission, they were recorded and later transcribed for qualitative analysis.

3.2 Measures, Pilot Testing, Reliability and Validity

Strategic leadership was measured as a composite of strategic direction setting, participative decision-making, accountability-oriented leadership, and adaptive leadership, with ten five-point Likert items per dimension (Heifetz et al., 2009; Northouse, 2022). The mediator was measured with ten items covering diversity in experience, qualifications, skills, functional backgrounds, and tenure. Because several items assessed whether such diversity supported task execution, knowledge integration, collaboration, knowledge transfer, and team performance, the article labels this score competence heterogeneity utilization rather than treating it as a purely demographic composition index (Hambrick et al., 1996; Harrison & Klein, 2007). Organizational performance was measured with ten items covering service efficiency, target achievement, governance compliance, service quality, and resource-utilization efficiency.

The questionnaire was piloted with 30 respondents who were excluded from the main study. Internal consistency was acceptable across all six constructs: Cronbach's alpha was .897 for strategic direction setting, .919 for participative decision-making, .901 for accountability-oriented leadership, .919 for adaptive leadership, .884 for competence heterogeneity, and .919 for

organizational performance. Construct suitability was further examined using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure and Bartlett’s test. KMO values ranged from .796 to .830, and Bartlett’s test was significant for every construct ($p < .001$), supporting factorability of the item sets. The key-informant guide was pilot reviewed with senior managers and subject specialists for clarity and coherence (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978; Field, 2018; Kaiser, 1974).

3.3 Ethics, Confidentiality and Common-Method Controls

Before fieldwork, the researcher obtained a research authorization letter through the Graduate Business School at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), and administrative authorization from the participating ministries. Participants received information on the study purpose, procedures, confidentiality safeguards, and their right to decline or withdraw without penalty. Written consent was obtained before questionnaires or interviews, with verbal confirmation at in-person interviews and a mandatory digital consent item for online questionnaires. No names or personal identifiers were collected. Questionnaires were coded, electronic data and recordings were stored on password-protected devices with restricted access, and hard-copy questionnaires were kept in a locked cabinet and shredded after completion of the study.

Because the quantitative constructs were collected by self-report at one time point, common-method bias could not be ruled out. Procedurally, anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and neutral administration were used to reduce evaluation pressure. The 15 key-informant interviews provided an independent qualitative source against which the survey patterns were compared. Convergence between the two evidence streams reduced, but did not eliminate, the possibility that the main patterns were solely a consequence of common-method response tendencies.

3.4 Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations were first examined. Statistical mediation was then assessed using the archived four-path regression procedure associated with Baron and Kenny (1986): strategic leadership predicting organizational performance (path c), strategic leadership predicting CHU (path a), CHU predicting organizational performance while controlling for strategic leadership (path b), and the remaining strategic-leadership coefficient in the joint model (path c’). The indirect effect was calculated as $a \times b$ and assessed with the Sobel statistic (Sobel, 1982; MacKinnon et al., 1995). Corrected coefficients and standard errors from the dissertation analysis were used in this article. Because the design was cross-sectional, the regression paths are interpreted as associations and the term statistical mediation is used rather than causal transmission. The archived output did not retain a nonparametric bootstrap confidence interval; accordingly, the Sobel result is reported as the available formal test, and the absence of a bootstrap interval is acknowledged as a limitation.

3.5 Qualitative Analysis and Mixed-Methods Integration

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, anonymized, and imported into NVivo for reflexive thematic analysis. Analysis involved repeated familiarization with transcripts, initial coding, development of candidate themes, review of coherence within and across transcripts, and refinement of theme definitions. Coding focused on strategic direction, decision processes, accountability structures, adaptive practices, competence deployment, and competence-utilization

gaps. Trustworthiness was supported through respondent validation, an audit trail, reflexive memoing, peer review of codes, and detailed contextual description. Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during interpretation by comparing convergent and divergent patterns, so that interview evidence contextualized rather than causally validated the statistical mediation results.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Strategic Leadership (Composite)	264	1.00	5.00	3.58	0.47
Competence Heterogeneity Utilization	264	1.00	5.00	3.57	0.61
Organizational Performance	264	1.00	5.00	3.61	0.57

Note. Source: Field Data (2026).

The three composite scores had closely clustered means ranging from 3.57 to 3.61. On the five-point response scale, these values indicate generally favourable but not extreme perceptions of strategic leadership, CHU, and organizational performance in the selected ministries. The difference between the highest and lowest mean was .04, indicating broadly similar average ratings across the three study variables rather than a pronounced difference in any one construct.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Pearson Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	SLP	CHU	OP
Strategic Leadership (SLP)	—		
Competence Heterogeneity Utilization (CHU)	.773**	—	
Organizational Performance (OP)	.828**	.724**	—

Note. **p < .01 (two-tailed). N = 264.

All bivariate correlations were positive and statistically significant at $p < .01$. Strategic leadership was strongly correlated with organizational performance ($r = .828$) and with CHU ($r = .773$), while CHU was strongly correlated with organizational performance ($r = .724$). These associations supported proceeding to the planned regression-based statistical mediation analysis. The correlations are interpreted as contemporaneous relationships and do not establish temporal direction.

4.3 Statistical Mediation Analysis

The corrected archived regression results are reported below. The sequence is used to describe a statistical indirect association; it is not interpreted as evidence of causal ordering.

4.3.1 Strategic Leadership and Organizational Performance (Path c)

Table 3: Regression Results for Path c (SLP → OP)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	R ²	F
Strategic Leadership	1.001	.042	.828	23.917	< .001	.686	572.023

Note. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance. df = (1, 262).

Strategic leadership was strongly and statistically associated with organizational performance ($B = 1.001$, $SE = .042$, $\beta = .828$, $t = 23.917$, $p < .001$), with $R^2 = .686$. The corrected R^2 is consistent with the bivariate correlation because, in a simple regression with one predictor, R^2 equals r^2 . This result establishes a strong total statistical association between strategic leadership and organizational performance in the selected ministries.

4.3.2 Strategic Leadership and Competence Heterogeneity Utilization (Path a)

Table 4: Regression Results for Path a (SLP → CHU)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	R ²	F
Strategic Leadership	1.003	.051	.773	19.725	< .001	.598	389.076

Note. Dependent variable: Competence Heterogeneity Utilization. df = (1, 262).

Strategic leadership was strongly and statistically associated with CHU ($B = 1.003$, $SE = .051$, $\beta = .773$, $t = 19.725$, $p < .001$), with $R^2 = .598$. Because CHU captures perceived presence and functional use of competence diversity, this result is interpreted as an association between leadership practices and employees' perceptions of how diverse competences are mobilized, not as evidence that leadership caused changes in the demographic composition of the workforce.

4.3.3 Joint Model: Competence Heterogeneity Utilization and Strategic Leadership

Table 5

Regression Results for Paths b and c' (Joint Model)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Strategic Leadership (c')	.807	.064	.667	12.549	< .001
Competence Heterogeneity Utilization (b)	.195	.050	.209	3.925	< .001

Note. Dependent variable: Organizational Performance. $R^2 = .703$.

In the joint model, CHU remained statistically associated with organizational performance after controlling for strategic leadership ($B = .195$, $SE = .050$, $\beta = .209$, $t = 3.925$, $p < .001$). The strategic-leadership coefficient was $B = .807$ ($SE = .064$, $\beta = .667$, $t = 12.549$, $p < .001$), lower

than its total coefficient of $B = 1.001$. The joint model explained 70.3% of the variance in organizational performance ($R^2 = .703$). This pattern is consistent with partial statistical mediation: an indirect association through CHU coexisted with a substantial remaining association between strategic leadership and organizational performance.

4.3.4 Indirect Effect

Table 6: Sobel Test Results for the Indirect Association

Path	Coefficient	SE	Sobel z	p	Indirect Effect
a (SLP → CHU)	1.003	.051			
b (CHU → OP SLP)	.195	.050			
Indirect (a × b)			3.850	< .001	.196

Note. Indirect association = $a \times b$. The proportion $.196/1.001$ is approximately 19.5%.

The product of the corrected path coefficients was .196 ($1.003 \times .195$). Using the archived unrounded estimates, the Sobel statistic was $z = 3.850$ ($p < .001$), supporting a statistically significant indirect association through CHU. The indirect coefficient was approximately 19.5% of the total coefficient ($c = 1.001$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The joint model accounted for 70.3% of the variance in organizational performance compared with 68.6% for the simple strategic-leadership model. Because the design was cross-sectional and a nonparametric bootstrap confidence interval was not retained in the archived output, this finding is described as partial statistical mediation rather than causal transmission.

4.4 Qualitative Findings

Key-informant interviews produced themes consistent with the quantitative pattern while also clarifying how competence diversity was experienced in practice. Respondents from human resource management, programme delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and other technical functions described deliberate cross-functional team composition as useful for decision quality and implementation. They also reported that competence diversity was not consistently utilized because staffing decisions could be shaped by seniority or availability rather than competence matching. These themes contextualize CHU as a utilization construct and do not independently establish causal mediation.

One respondent observed that “when leadership deliberately assembles teams with complementary expertise, the quality of decisions and the speed of implementation improve noticeably, because no single officer carries all the knowledge needed for complex programme delivery” (KII, 2026). Another noted that “teams that are diverse on paper are not always deployed to capitalize on that diversity; sometimes staffing decisions follow seniority or availability rather than competence matching” (KII, 2026). A third respondent stated that “the most effective cross-functional teams are those where leadership has actively mapped the competences needed and deliberately assembled officers who bring different specializations, not just different grades” (KII, 2026).

The interview themes are compatible with the statistical mediation pattern in two respects. First, accounts of complementary expertise and cross-functional work provide contextual support for why CHU may be associated with organizational performance (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011; Harrison & Klein, 2007). Second, reports that competence diversity is not always deliberately leveraged help explain why CHU is only one part of the leadership–performance relationship. The qualitative evidence therefore complements the survey results by identifying plausible organizational processes, while the cross-sectional design precludes claiming that those processes were temporally causal.

5. Discussion

The corrected analysis indicates partial statistical mediation through CHU: approximately 19.5% of the total strategic leadership coefficient was represented by the indirect association. This contributes to literature that has often examined the leadership–performance relationship as a direct association (Li et al., 2025; Dhlamini, 2025). The finding is consistent with Hambrick et al. (1996), who show that competence diversity can shape organizational action, and with Ployhart and Moliterno's (2011) argument that individual human-capital resources become collective capability through processes that combine and deploy them. The present contribution is narrower: within the three selected ministries, perceptions of leadership, competence-diversity utilization, and performance were strongly interrelated.

The partial pattern also indicates that CHU does not exhaust the statistical relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance. After CHU was included, strategic leadership retained a large and significant coefficient ($B = .807$, $\beta = .667$, $p < .001$). Strategic leadership may therefore be associated with performance through several organizational routes, while competence-diversity utilization represents one identifiable route in the present model (Preacher & Hayes, 2004; MacKinnon et al., 1995). This interpretation avoids invoking the four separate direct-effect analyses reported elsewhere in the dissertation because those dimension-specific models are not presented in this article.

The results also refine the application of Human Capital Theory. The theory appropriately emphasizes the productive potential of knowledge, skills, qualifications, and experience, but the present instrument and interview data suggest that possession of diverse competences is not sufficient. Their organizational value depends on whether they are combined, matched to tasks, and used in collaborative work (Becker, 1964; Lepak & Snell, 1999). This distinction between competence composition and competence utilization responds directly to a limitation of stock-based interpretations of human capital. It also provides a practical bridge between Human Capital Theory and strategic deployment perspectives that emphasize how leaders organize and mobilize available expertise (Wright et al., 2001).

6. Conclusions

The study concludes that CHU statistically mediated part of the association between strategic leadership and organizational performance in the three selected central government ministries. The corrected total model for strategic leadership explained 68.6% of the variance in organizational performance, while the joint model containing strategic leadership and CHU explained 70.3%. The indirect coefficient was .196 and the Sobel statistic was significant ($z = 3.850$, $p < .001$), representing approximately 19.5% of the total coefficient. The null hypothesis was rejected. These findings support partial statistical mediation but, because the data were cross-sectional, they do not establish that strategic leadership temporally caused CHU or organizational performance.

The qualitative evidence further indicates that competence diversity is more useful when complementary expertise is deliberately matched to teams and assignments. At the same time, respondents reported that diverse competences were not consistently utilized. CHU should therefore be understood as a perceived organizational resource reflecting both the presence and functional use of diverse experience, qualifications, skills, functions, and tenure. The conclusion is bounded to the sampled ministries and should not be generalized automatically to counties, commissions, state corporations, or all national ministries.

7. Implications for Practice

First, the participating ministries should institutionalize competence mapping as a routine human-resource practice. Mapping should identify qualifications, functional specializations, experiential backgrounds, skills, and tenure profiles and should be connected to team composition, task allocation, project staffing, and committee membership (Lepak & Snell, 1999; Wright et al., 2001). The practical aim is not to maximize diversity for its own sake but to improve the fit between complementary competences and the requirements of complex assignments.

Second, the Ministry of Public Service, Human Capital Development and Special Programs should strengthen succession planning and workforce-deployment frameworks so that competence profiles inform recruitment, deployment, promotion, and succession decisions. Practices based primarily on seniority or administrative convenience should be balanced with evidence about competence complementarity and task requirements (Hambrick et al., 1996; Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011).

Third, the Kenya School of Government should incorporate practical leadership modules on competence mapping, cross-functional team design, knowledge transfer, and competence-conscious task allocation. Such training would help public officers distinguish between merely having a diverse workforce and deliberately utilizing heterogeneous competences in ways that support service delivery and institutional performance.

8. Limitations

The study has five principal limitations. First, the cross-sectional design does not establish temporal ordering or causal mediation. Second, quantitative variables were self-reported in a single survey, so common-method response tendencies may remain despite anonymity and qualitative triangulation. Third, the study covered only three purposively selected ministries, limiting external generalizability. Fourth, organizational performance was perception-based rather than derived from administrative performance records. Fifth, the archived analysis available for this manuscript did not retain a nonparametric bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect; consequently, the article reports corrected regression and Sobel statistics and treats the mediation result cautiously.

9. Future Research Directions

Future research should re-estimate the indirect association using respondent-level data and nonparametric bootstrap confidence intervals, such as those implemented in the PROCESS framework (Hayes, 2018). Longitudinal or repeated-measures designs are needed to establish temporal precedence and to test whether changes in leadership practices precede changes in competence utilization and performance. Studies should also disaggregate experience, qualification, skill, functional, and tenure diversity, distinguish objective workforce composition from perceived utilization, and incorporate administrative performance indicators. Replication across additional ministries, counties, commissions, and state corporations would clarify the boundary conditions of the present findings.

10. Acknowledgments

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11. Data Availability Statement

The study data contain responses from public-sector employees collected under confidentiality assurances. Any data sharing must therefore remain consistent with the original ethical and institutional permissions.

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